

IBN JAHBAL  
AL-KILĀBĪ

THE REFUTATION OF HIM [IBN TAYMIYYA]  
WHO ATTRIBUTES DIRECTION TO ALLĀH  
*al-Raddu 'alā Man Qāla bil-Jiha*

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*Introduction*  
SHAYKH WAHBI SULAYMAN GHAWJI

*Translation and Notes*  
GIBRIL FOUAD HADDAD

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HADDAD

AQSA

The present volume is a special "all-Damascene" edition, which contains the very first (and definitive) English translation of Ibn Jahbal's Arabic text; completed by an authorized, nay Damascus-trained and native scholar, Shaykh Gibril Fouad Haddad, who possesses the complete and exclusively Dimashqī *ijāza* going back to the original Damascene author; and supplemented by superb scholarly documentation and a running commentary. The volume includes the *Muqaddima* of one of Damascus's senior living Ḥanafi jurists, Shaykh Wahbī Sulaymān Ghāwījī, which presents an up-to-date explanation of figurative interpretation in Islamic theology. The volume is also prefaced by another introduction, which catalogues the problematic positions of the redoubtable Ibn Taymiyya raised by scholars throughout the ages including his own students, regarding which a Dimashqī *muḥaddith* recently quipped: "The mistakes of the great are the greatest mistakes."

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AQSA PUBLICATIONS

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AQSA Publications, Birmingham, UK  
<http://www.aqsapublications.com>  
[info@aqsapublications.com](mailto:info@aqsapublications.com)

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A CIP catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN: 0-9547540-8-5

January 2008 / Muharram 1429

Book design and typesetting by Abd al-Hafidh Wentzel  
Cover design by S Hussain

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The translator wishes to thank Jawad Qureshi and especially Zainab Chaudhry for their meticulous proofing of this work.

*“Stay away from talk of limits and direction.”*

Al-Muḥāsibī, *Risālat al-Mustarshidīn*.

*“The Pre-Eternal One ﷻ does not have a ‘towards’ nor a limit. Nor is there any link between Him and creatures nor any separation from them. Being in a place, for Him, is an absurd impossibility. He was – Exalted is He – when there was no place, and He is now just as He ever was.”*

Al-Qushayrī, *al-Mi‘rāj*.

*“The sum total of our knowledge of Allāh ﷻ is certitude in His existence without modality and without place.”*

Aḥmad al-Rifā‘ī, *Ḥikam*.

*“The attribution of ‘highness’ to Allāh ﷻ refers to meaning. It is impossible that it refer to sensory perception.”*

Ibn Ḥajar, *Fath al-Bārī*.

## ABBREVIATIONS

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Abū Dāwūd = his *Sunan*

Abū Nu‘aym = his *Ḥilya*

Aḥmad = his *Musnad*

Al-Bukhārī = his *Ṣaḥīḥ*

Al-Dāraquṭnī = his *Sunan*

Al-Dārimī = his *Musnad*, also known as the *Sunan*

Al-Ḥākim = his *Mustadrak ‘alā al-Ṣaḥīḥayn*

Al-Haythamī = his *Majma‘ al-Zawā‘id*

Ibn Abī Shayba = his *Muṣannaf*

Ibn ‘Asākir = his *Tārīkh Dimashq*

Ibn Ḥibbān = his *Ṣaḥīḥ*

Ibn Mājah = his *Sunan*

Muslim = his *Ṣaḥīḥ*

Al-Nasā‘ī = his minor *Sunan* known as *al-Mujtabā*

Al-Tirmidhī = his *Sunan*

## FOREWORD

BY SHAYKH MUHAMMAD AFIFI AL-AKITI

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Like the Judaic and Christian theological traditions, the Islamic one also, – arguably with less crassness – faced the problems of scriptural literalism that result in an anthropomorphic theology. As the early (*salaf*) Muslim community became more sophisticated and began to lead the world in scientific progress – and especially from the time of Islam’s *Doctor Angelicus*, al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111) – Muslim theologians came to embrace and institutionalize the case for *ta’wīl*. This was Islām’s systematic solution of the problem, through a canon of figurative interpretation of scripture as a necessary tool of hermeneutics.

Not only did the method of *ta’wīl* keep anthropomorphism in check through offering a middle way in the understanding of Divine Attributes as limited by human language, but it served to reconcile Divine Scripture with the discoveries afforded by human reason. This legitimization of *ta’wīl* by the classical ‘*ulamā*’ and its systematic treatment in the Golden Age of Islām made it an established doctrine among Muslim theologians. It became the standard position in later (*khalaf*) orthodoxy within the Sunni tradition (alongside the formerly dominant, simpler alternative, and utterly unexplainable “non-method”: *tafwīd*) – the cultural milieu that brought forth this work.

This short theological tract, *Fī Nafī al-Jiha*, or *On Denying Direction to God*, by the Ash‘ari theologian and celebrated Shafi‘i jurist, Qādī Ibn Jahbal (d. 733/1333), is a clinical rebuttal of the controversial fatwā, the ‘*Aqīda Ḥamawiyya*, penned by his legendary contemporary, Ibn Taymiyya (d. 728/1328). It is

considered, rightly, a classic manifesto of anti-literalism, which embraces the successful pro-*ta'wīl* Ghazālīan theses advocated centuries earlier – to the extent that Ibn al-Subkī (d. 771/1370) reproduced the whole of Ibn Jahbal's work in his magisterial *Ṭabaqāt*.

The present volume is a special "all-Damascene" edition, which contains the very first (and definitive) English translation of Ibn Jahbal's Arabic text; completed by an authorized, nay Damascus-trained and native scholar, Shaykh Gibril Fouad Haddad, who possesses the complete and exclusively Dimashqī *ijāza* going back to the original Damascene author; and supplemented by superb scholarly documentation and a running commentary. The volume includes the *Muqaddima* of one of Damascus's senior living Ḥanafī jurists, Shaykh Wahbī Sulaymān Ghāwji, which presents an up-to-date explanation of figurative interpretation in Islamic theology. The volume is also prefaced by another introduction, which catalogues the problematic positions of the redoubtable Ibn Taymiyya raised by scholars throughout the ages including his own students, regarding which a Dimashqī *muḥaddith* recently quipped: "The mistakes of the great are the greatest mistakes."

This convenient *Collectio Errorum* by Shaykh Haddad is not a zero-sum critique. In fact, it will be appreciated for it isolates Ibn Taymiyya's unquestionably controversial materials from the rest of his vast corpus – thus enabling one to take the good and leave the bad; and this list will be a service to the non-scholar who might want to benefit from reading the works of this prolific Ḥanbalī jurist, one who is now enjoying a greater following and who indeed can be said to be a phenomenon of present-day Islām.



Along with a work by an earlier Ḥanbalī theologian, the *Daf Shubah al-Tashbih* of Ibn al-Jawzī (d. 597/1200), this medieval contribution by Ibn Jahbal remains one of the most important texts refuting the anthropomorphists of the Muslim world. This will be an indispensable reference for advanced students of Islamic theology, other professional theologians, and modern academics needing primary source materials in English or a source book on the controversies surrounding Ibn Taymiyya's theology.

This same work embodies, moreover, a contemporary exercise in polemic representing the longstanding views in the conformist tradition of Muslim theology, whether via *ta'wīl* or *tafwīd*, and whether in the schools of the Ash'arīs, Māturīdīs or Ḥanbalīs. In particular, it pits itself against one of the two opposite non-conformist readings of the Qur'ān and Sunna; and in general, it highlights the pitfalls of a literalistic mindset which plagues all scripturally-based religions.

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## TRANSLATOR'S INTRODUCTION

### IBN JAHBAL AL-KILĀBĪ

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Aḥmad ibn Muḥyī al-Dīn Yaḥyā ibn Tāj al-Dīn Ismā‘īl ibn Ṭāhīr ibn Naṣr Allāh ibn Jahbal, al-Qāḍī Shihāb al-Dīn or Nāṣir al-Dīn Abū al-‘Abbās al-Kilābī al-Ḥalabī *thumma* al-Dimashqī al-Shāfi‘ī al-Ash‘arī, known as Ibn Jahbal (670-733), is described in al-Dhahabī’s *Siyar A‘lām al-Nubalā*’ as “the erudite scholar, the guiding leader of Muslims” and in his *Ibar fī Khabari Man ‘Abar* as “The muftī of the Muslims.”<sup>1</sup> He took *fiqh* from Abū al-Faraj Sharaf al-Dīn al-Maqdisī, al-Ṣadr ibn al-Wakīl, Ibn al-Naqīb, Muḥammad ibn ‘Umar Ṣadr al-Dīn ibn al-Muraḥḥal al-‘Uthmānī, and ḥadīth from Abū al-Ḥasan ibn al-Bukhārī, ‘Umar ibn ‘Abd al-Mun‘im ibn al-Qawwās, Aḥmad ibn Hibat Allāh ibn ‘Asākir, and others. He narrated in Makka, Madīna, al-Qudus, and Damascus. He taught at the Ṣalāḥiyya School in al-Qudus then moved to Damascus where he assumed the headmastership of Dār al-Ḥadīth at al-Zāhiriyya. When the headmaster of the Bādirā’iyya School died, he replaced him while al-Dhahabī took over Dār al-Ḥadīth. He died in Damascus at age sixty-three and was buried in Maqbarat al-Ṣūfiyya. His older brother, the headmaster of the Atābakiyya School, vice-governor of Damascus and *qāḍī* of Tripoli, Muḥyī al-Dīn Abū al-Fidā

<sup>1</sup> Al-Dhahabī, *al-‘Ibar* (4:96-97).

Ismā‘īl ibn Yaḥyā (666-740) survived him seven years and was buried next to him.

Al-Dhahabī said of Ibn Jahbal: “There was great goodness and pious devotion in him; he possessed excellent traits, great merits, and perspicuity in the ramifications of knowledge.” Ibn Kathīr in his *Bidāya* named him “the Shaykh, the admirable Imām, the muftī of the Muslims” and said: “He was among the authoritative *fuqahā’*. He took nothing from the Bādirā’iyya nor the Zāhiriyya which he did not already know.” Ibn al-Kutbī said: “He was a scrupulously Godwary scholar. When he fell sick he spent a great deal in charity, including his clothes.” After relating the above in the *Durar al-Kāmina*, Ibn Ḥajar said: “Our Shaykh al-Burhān al-Shāmī narrated to us what he heard from him.” Ibn Jahbal also taught the historian and ḥadīth Master ‘Alam al-Dīn al-Birzālī and the lexicographer Majd al-Dīn al-Fayrūzābādī who read *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* to him in Damascus in three days.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Cf. al-Qāsimī’s *Qawā’id al-Taḥdīth* (p. 262).



## The Controversy Surrounding Ibn Taymiyya's Orthodoxy

Ibn Jahbal's *al-Radd 'alā Man Qāla bil-Jiha* or "The Refutation of Him Who Attributes Direction [to Allāh]" came in response to a *fatwā* given in the year 698 to some people from Ḥamā:

Towards the end of the rule of Lājīn after Qabjaq left Syria, a trial took place for Shaykh Taqī al-Dīn Ibn Taymiyya. A group of jurists opposed him and demanded that he be summoned before the judge Jalāl al-Dīn al-Ḥanafī but he did not come. An outcry was raised in the country concerning the statement of doctrine (*al-'aqīda*) that the people of Ḥamā had asked him and which is called *al-Ḥamawiyya*. The Emir Sayf al-Dīn Jā'ān defended him and sent out word summoning those who had opposed him. Many of them hid themselves while others were flogged. As a result, the rest remained silent. On the day of Jumu'a, Shaykh Taqī al-Dīn held his usual gathering in the mosque and explained the statement of Allāh Most High, {*And lo! You are of a tremendous nature*} (68:4). Then he met with the qāḍī Imām al-Dīn on the following day, at which time a group of eminent people gathered there and discussed the *Ḥamawiyya*. They disputed with him over certain passages but he gave

them replies that silenced them after much talk. Then Shaykh Taqī al-Dīn left and things went back to normal.<sup>3</sup>

The “group of jurists” rightly saw in the *Fatwā Ḥamawīyya* a sophisticated attempt at reviving the belief of the Karrāmiyya sect in the corporeality, place, upward direction (*jihāt al-‘uluw*) and literal aboveness (*fawqīyya ḥaqīqīyya*) of Allāh Most High. The *fatwā* was forgotten until its revival by the “Salafīs” and recently received a glossy edition at the hands of one of the Saudi propagandists of the Wahhābī movement, Ḥamd al-Tuwayjirī, the author of *‘Aqīdat Ahl al-Īmān fī Khalqī Ādama ‘alā Ṣūrat al-Raḥmān* (“The Doctrine of the Believers Concerning the Creation of Ādam in the Image of the Merciful”), in which he actually quotes the book of Genesis – “We shall create Man in Our image and likeness” – in support of his anthropomorphism.<sup>4</sup> Ibn al-Subkī reproduced Ibn Jahbal’s refutation in full in his *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfi‘īyya al-Kubrā* and we publish its full annotated translation here for the first time.

<sup>3</sup> Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya wal-Nihāya* (year 698).

<sup>4</sup> Al-Tuwayjirī is the muftī who demanded that women caught driving in Saudi Arabia be labeled as prostitutes in the courts. He authored a 300-page book titled *al-Diobandiyya* in which he castigates the Ulema of Deoband as holding corrupt and deviant beliefs. See our book *Albānī and His Friends*.

## The Sunni Stand Against Anthropomorphism

Strange as they sound, the positions forwarded in the *Fatwā Hamawiyya* affirming the upward direction, altitude, and literal aboveness of Allāh Most High on top of the sky are nothing new. Christians have been saying “Our Father Who art in heaven” in this sense for centuries and it is part of their obligatory creed to say that on the Day of Judgment “the Son [Jesus] will be seated at the right hand of the Father.” The Ulema have refuted similar intimations of anthropomorphism since the earliest times. Ibn Jahbal only recounted some of their statements and clarified them in the best way he could.

Imām Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, for example, said that the sayings of Allāh {*Wait they for naught else than that Allāh should come unto them in the shadows of the clouds with the angels?*} (2:210) and {*Await they aught save that the angels should come unto them or your Lord’s command should come to pass?*} (16:33) refer to the Jews, as do the verses {*O you who believe! Come, all of you, into submission – and if you slide back after the clear proofs have come unto you, then know that Allāh is Mighty, Wise.*} (2:208-209).<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> As established in al-Wāhidī’s *Asbāb al-Nuzūl* and al-Suyūṭī’s *Asbāb al-Nuzūl*. This is also the position of Ibn Kathīr, al-Qurṭubī, and others on verse 2:210.

The meaning is: "They shall not accept your Religion except if Allāh comes to them in the shadows of the clouds so that they can see Him distinctly," for the Jews were anthropomorphists (*mushabbiha*). They considered it possible for Allāh to come and go, and they said that He manifested Himself to Mūsā عليه السلام on the Mount in the shadows of the clouds. So they asked for something similar in the time of Muḥammad صلى الله عليه وسلم.<sup>6</sup>

Imām al-Qushayrī said in the beginning of his famous *Risāla*:

I heard the Shaykh Abū ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥusayn al-Sulamī say – Allāh have mercy on him!: I heard ‘Abd Allāh ibn Mūsā al-Sulamī say: I heard Abū Bakr al-Shiblī say: "The One (*al-Wāḥid*) is [He Who ought to be] known [to exist] before limits/directions (*al-ḥudūd*) and before letters/sounds (*al-ḥurūf*)." This is an explicit statement on al-Shiblī's part that the Pre-Eternal (*al-Qadīm*) has no limit/place/direction for His Essence (*lā ḥadda li-dhātih*).

Shaykh Muḥammad Sa‘īd Ramaḍān al-Būṭī commented on the above: "We do not explain elevation (*‘uluw*) but simply attribute it to Allāh Most High because He attributed it to Himself in the Book. For height, with respect to a human being, is relative, while in relation to Allāh, it is absolute. Al-Shiblī linked this to His being 'The One.' That is, 'He was and there was nothing with Him' – *i.e.* neither place nor direction."<sup>7</sup>

Imām Abū Manṣūr al-Māturidī (d. 333) said: "To suggest a place for Allāh is idolatry."<sup>8</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Al-Rāzī, *al-Taḥsīn al-Kabīr* cf. al-Kawtharī's notes on al-Bayhaqī's *al-Asmā' wal-Ṣifāt* (Kawtharī ed. p. 448).

<sup>7</sup> From his Damascus Jumū‘a lectures on the *Risāla Qushayriyya* in the late nineties.

<sup>8</sup> Quoted in Abū Ḥanīfa, *Kitāb al-Fiqh al-Akbar bi-Sharḥ al-Qārī* (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Arabiyya al-Kubrā, 1327/1909) p. 16; cf. "al-Māturidī" [Abū al-Layth al-Samarqandī], *Sharḥ al-Fiqh al-Akbar* in *Majmū‘at Rasā’il* (Hyderabad: Maṭba‘at Majlis Dā‘irat al-Ma‘ārif al-Nizāmiyya, 1903).

Ibn Ḥazm said: "By no means whatsoever is Allāh in a place or time. This is the position of the vast majority of the scholars (*al-jumhūr*) and ours as well, and other than this position is not permissible, for anything other than that is false."<sup>9</sup>

Qāḍī Badr al-Dīn Ibn Jamā'a said: "Know that the term 'above' (*fawq*) in the language of the Arabs is used to mean the firmly established location of height (*al-ḥayyiz al-thābit al-‘ālī*) and it is used in the sense of power (*al-quḍra*) and upper rank (*al-rutbat al-‘aliyya*). Examples of the aboveness of power are the verses {*The Hand of Allāh is above (fawq) their hands*} (48:10) and {*He is the Omnipotent over (fawq) His slaves*} (6:18, 6:61). For what accompanies the mention of the omnipotence indicates that sense."<sup>10</sup>

Fakhr al-Islām Abū al-Ḥasan ‘Alī ibn Muḥammad al-Pazdawī (d. 482) said in his magisterial *Uṣūl*:

For us [Māturīdīs], {*those who are firmly grounded in knowledge*} (3:7) have no share in the knowledge of the ambiguous content of Qur’ān (*al-mutashābih*) other than pure resignation (*al-taslīm*), believing in the real nature of the meaning (*ḥaqqiyyat al-murād*) in the Divine presence and that the pause at His saying: {*None knows its explanation save Allāh*} (3:7) is required (*waqf wājib*). The People of Belief belong to one of two levels in knowledge: some over-zealously demand that it be read without pause – those are tested with a form of ignorance; some demand the pause – those are honored with a form of knowledge [...]. An example of the ambiguous verses is the individual letters that open certain sūras. Another example is the affirmation of His vision with the

<sup>9</sup> In *al-Fiṣal fīl-Mīlal* (2:125).

<sup>10</sup> Ibn Jamā'a, *Īdāḥ al-Dalīl* (p. 108).

sight of the eyes in reality in the hereafter, according to the explicit text of the Qur'ān: {On that day will faces be resplendent, looking towards their Lord} (75:22-23). For He exists with the attribute of perfection, and the fact that He can be seen both by Himself and others is among the characteristics of perfection; moreover, the believer is made to receive such bestowal of the Divine gift. However, the affirmation of direction is precluded (*ithbāt al-jihā mumtani'*). It follows that the description of the vision is among the ambiguities, and so it is obligatory to assent to it while believing in its reality. Similarly, the affirmation of the Hand and the Face are right (*ḥaqq*) in our School, known in principle (*ma'lūmun bi-aṣlihi*) but ambiguous in description (*mutashābihun bi-waṣfihi*).<sup>11</sup> It is not permitted to invalidate the principle on the grounds that one is unable to comprehend the descrip-

<sup>11</sup> Hence the invalidity of Ibn Taymiyya's claim in *al-Iklīl fīl-Mutashābih* in the *Majmū' al-Fatāwā* (13:309-310) that since "Mālik did not say that the modality was nonexistent but only that it was unknown", resignation (*tafwīd*) consists only in the resignation of the modality (*kayfiyya*) and not that of meaning (*ma'nā*). This argument banks on an anomalous version of Mālik's statement on *istiwā'* cf. our *Four Imāms*. Mālik said the modality is unthinkable (*ghayru ma'qūl*) i.e. nonexistent. Imām Aḥmad himself said: "We believe and confirm the ḥadīths of the Attributes without 'how' and without meaning" (see below, note 262). This is also Imām al-Baghawī's definition of *tafwīd* in *Sharḥ al-Sunna* (1:170): "The *Salaf* of this Nation and the Scholars of the Sunna accepted all [the reports about the Attributes] with faith and avoided likening Allāh to His creation and figurative interpretation. They committed (*wakalū*) all knowledge pertaining to them [the Attributes] to Allāh." Imām al-Nawawī defines *tafwīd* as the committal of meaning in countless places of his *Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*. Shaykh al-Islām Taqī al-Dīn al-Subkī in *al-Sayf al-Ṣaqīl* (p. 128) pointed out that the inconceivability of the modality of *istiwā'* proved that it precluded the meaning of sitting. Similarly, al-Nabhānī in *Shawāhid al-Ḥaqq* (p. 251) pointed out that "If the meaning of such verses were known it could not be other than in the sense in which the attributes of created entities are known, as in *istiwā'* in the sense of sitting (*al-julūs*) which we know in relation to ourselves, and this applies to the rest of the ambiguous terms." A more recent attempt to force this particular error of Ibn Taymiyya through the wall of correct doctrine can be seen in Mashhūr Salmān's book *al-Rudūd wal-Ta'aqqubāt* (p. 67-84) in which he casts aspersions on Imām al-Nawawī's Sunnī definition of *tafwīd*.

tion. The Mu‘tazila went astray only in this respect, for they rejected the principles because of their ignorance of the Attributes and became nullifiers-of-the-Attributes (*mu‘aṭṭila*).

In his commentary on al-Pazdawī’s *Uṣūl* entitled *Kashf al-Asrār* (1:55-60) Shaykh ‘Alā’ al-Dīn al-Bukhārī (d. 730) comments on the above passage:

By saying: “For us,” the Shaykh shunned the position of those who say: “Allāh is not to be described as possessing a face and hands, rather, what is meant by the face is contentment (*al-riḍā*) or the Essence (*al-dhāt*) and the like; and what is meant by the hand is power or favor and the like.” The Shaykh therefore said: Rather, Allāh is described with the Attribute of Face and that of Hand, together with the upholding of His Transcendence (*tanzīh*) above having a form (*ṣūra*) and a limb (*jāriha*) [...]. Similarly with the affirmation of modality (*ithbāt al-kayfiyya*): its description is ambiguous, therefore it is obligatory to resign to it, firmly believing in its reality without busying oneself with interpretation.

Ibn Taymiyya also contradicted the Sunni definition of the *mutashābih* as formulated by Imām Abū Maṣṣūr ‘Abd al-Qāhir al-Baghdādī in *Uṣūl al-Dīn* in which the latter cites, among those who consider the verse of *istiwā’* one of the *mutashābihāt* or Qur’ānic ambiguities, Imām Mālik ibn Anas, the seven jurists of Madīna, and al-Aṣma‘ī. This is also the position of Imām al-Khaṭṭābī in his commentary on Abū Dāwūd’s *Sunan* with regard to the meaning of the ḥadīth of the “descent” of Allāh Most High to the nearest heaven: “This [ḥadīth] belongs to the knowledge in the outward expression of which we have been ordered to believe and not seek to disclose its inward sense. It is among the

many ambiguities (*mutashābih*) which Allāh has mentioned in His book.”<sup>12</sup> Mullā ‘Alī al-Qārī states something similar with regard to the interpretation of the ḥadīth of the placing of the “Hand” of Allāh between the shoulders of the Prophet ﷺ (in his dream), as narrated by al-Tirmidhī who declared it *ḥasan ṣaḥīḥ*:

It is of necessity absurd to interpret it as a real or literal manifestation (*tajallī ḥaqīqī*). Allāh ﷻ has many kinds of manifestations (*anwā‘ min al-tajalliyāt*) according to His Essence and Attributes. Likewise, He possesses all-encompassing power and ability, well beyond the angels and all others, to fashion forms and appearances. Yet He is Transcendent beyond possessing a body (*jism*), a form (*ṣūra*), and directions (*jihāt*) with respect to His Essence. These considerations help solve many of the purported difficulties in the ambiguous verses and the narrations of the Attributes. Allāh knows best the reality of spiritual stations and the minutiae of objectives.... If the ḥadīth is shown to have something in its chain that indicates forgery, then fine; otherwise, the door of figurative interpretation is wide and imperative (*bāb al-ta’wīl wāsi‘un muḥattam*).<sup>13</sup>

All the above evidence shows the fallacy of Ibn Taymiyya’s typically over-reaching claim in the epistle entitled *al-Iklīl fil-Mutashābih wal-Ta’wīl* that “I do not know any of the *Salaf* of the Community nor any of the Imāms, neither Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal nor other than him, that considered these [the Divine Names and Attributes] as part of the *mutashābih*.”<sup>14</sup> Worse, as Qāḍī Yūsuf al-Nabhānī pointed out in *Shawāhid al-Ḥaqq*, Ibn

<sup>12</sup> Al-Khaṭṭābī, *Ma‘ālim al-Sunan* (Ḥims ed. 5:101).

<sup>13</sup> Al-Qārī, *al-Asrār al-Marfū‘a* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed. p. 209-210 §209; 1<sup>st</sup> ed. p. 126 §478).

<sup>14</sup> In *Majmū‘at al-Rasā’il* also compiled as *Majmū‘ al-Fatāwā* (13:294).



Taymiyya not only claimed to know the meaning of these verses, but also added categorical interpretive terms to their purported meanings, such as “literally” (*ḥaqīqatan*) and “with His essence” (*bi-dhātihī*).<sup>15</sup>



Ibn Jahbal’s refutation of Ibn Taymiyya remains one of the most precise statements of Sunni doctrine against anthropomorphism to date, together with Shaykh al-Islām al-Taqī al-Subkī’s *al-Sayf al-Ṣaqīl fīl-Radd ‘alā Ibn Zafīl* (a critique of Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya’s *Nūniyya* poem), Ibn al-Jawzī’s *Daf‘ Shubah al-Tashbīh* written against Abū Ya‘lā al-Ḥanbalī and other anthropomorphists, and the great Shāfi‘ī *Faqīh* of Damascus Taqī al-Dīn al-Ḥiṣnī’s scathing critique of Ibn Taymiyya entitled *Daf‘ Shubah man Shabbaha wa-Tamarrad wa-Nasaba Dhālika ilāl-Imām Aḥmad* (“Repelling the Sophistries of the Rebel Who Likens Allāh to Creation Then Attributes this Doctrine to Imām Aḥmad”). Other refutations of the heresy of the *jihawīyya* were authored by the following authorities:

- Ḥujjat al-Islām Imām al-Ghazzālī has a section in his *Qawā‘id al-‘Aqā‘id* in refutation of this heresy and also in *al-Risālat al-Qudsiyya*.
- His teacher Imām al-Ḥaramayn Ibn al-Juwaynī in *Luma‘ al-Adilla fī Qawā‘id ‘Aqā‘id Ahl al-Sunna*.

<sup>15</sup> Al-Nabhānī in *Shawāhid al-Ḥaqq* (p. 251).

- The ḥadīth Master Murtaḍā al-Zabīdī al-Ḥanafī in his commentary on *Iḥyā’ ‘Ulūm al-Dīn* titled *Iḥāf al-Sādat al-Muttaqīn*, section of the *Qawā’id*: “Direction does not surround Him and neither the earth nor the heavens are on different sides of Him.”
- Imām al-Kamāl ibn al-Humām in *al-Musāyara*, an abridgment of al-Ghazzālī’s *Qudsiyya*.
- Imām Ibn ‘Abd al-Salām said in his *Fatāwā* that the most correct position concerning those who attribute direction to Allāh ﷻ is that they are not *kāfir* but *mubtadi’*.<sup>16</sup>
- Imām Ibn al-Munayyir al-Mālikī refuted the *jihawīyya* heresy in his book *al-Muntaqā fi Sharaf al-Muṣṭafā* ﷺ.
- Imām Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī in his refutation of the Karrāmiyya sect titled *Asās al-Taqdīs* (which Ibn Taymiyya attacked at length and aimed to refute in a book he called *al-Taṣīs*) and in *al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr* for the verse {*He is the Omnipotent over His slaves*} (6:18, 6:61).
- Imām Shams al-Dīn Ibn al-Labbān in his book *Radd Mabānī al-Āyāt al-Mutashābihāt ilā Ma’ānī al-Āyāt al-Muḥkamāt*.
- Imām al-Yāfi’ī in his book *Nashr al-Maḥāsīn*.
- Sa’d al-Dīn al-Taftazānī in *Sharḥ al-Maqāshid*.
- Imam Shihāb al-Dīn al-Ramlī in his *Fatāwā* gave a long answer in refutation of this innovation.
- Shaykh al-Islām Taqī al-Dīn al-Subkī wrote in *al-Durrat al-Muḍīyya*:

<sup>16</sup> Ibn ‘Abd al-Salām, *Fatāwā* (p. 151-153).

When Ibn Taymiyya innovated whatever he innovated in the principles of Doctrine and destroyed the pillars and seams of the foundations of Islām after camouflaging himself with the pretense of following the Book and the Sunna, purportedly summoning people to the truth and guiding them to Paradise, he left conformity and entered innovation, strayed from the Congregation of the Muslims by violating the Consensus, and attributed to the Transcendent Essence what presupposes corporeality and compound nature.

- Imām al-Sha‘rānī discusses and rejects Ibn Taymiyya’s view as non-Sunnī in three of his books: *al-Yawāqīt wal-Jawāhir*, *al-Minan al-Kubrā* and *al-Kibrīt al-Aḥmar*.
- Imām Ibn Ḥajar al-Haytamī in his *Fatāwā Ḥadīthiyya* declared it impermissible to attribute direction or height to Allāh Most High in the literal sense and blasted Ibn Taymiyya for holding this and other deviant views. Both he and al-Subkī attributed *kufr* to him in ‘*aqīda* and countless innovations in the branches of the Law.<sup>17</sup>
- Qāḍī Yūsuf al-Nabhānī (1265-1350) refuted the same heresy in his recently republished *Raf‘ al-Ishṭibāh fī Istihālat al-Jiha ‘alā Allāh* (“The Removal of Doubt Concerning the Impossibility of Direction for Allāh”).<sup>18</sup> We will mention more refutations.

<sup>17</sup> Nu‘mān al-Alūsī – the “*Salafī*” son of the famous commentator – took the side of Ibn Taymiyya and attacked al-Haytamī in an epistle entitled *Jalā’ al-‘Aynayn bi-Muḥākamat al-Aḥmadayn* which al-Nabhānī in the *Shawāhid* and others refuted point by point.

<sup>18</sup> Reproduced in full in al-Nabhānī’s *Shawāhid al-Ḥaqq* (p. 210-240) and recently republished as a monograph.

Ibn Jahbal described his work thus: “Know that these clear proofs which we enumerated and which we received from the Shaykhs of the Path, were themselves inferred from none other than the Glorious Book. But not everything that is in the Glorious Book can be known by each and every person. Each can only scoop up what his vessel can contain, no more and no less.” Ibn Jahbal uses this simple and clear style to denounce out loud what everybody knows but no one is able to express about Ibn Taymiyya. He lays bare the intimidating manner in which Ibn Taymiyya produces avalanches of proofs that do not apply in reality, or are inauthentic, or both. In particular, Ibn Jahbal repeatedly emphasizes the gravity of discussing *kalām* issues in public in the guise of corrective *da‘wā* and the *fitna* it causes for the majority of the public at large, a sin for which, no doubt, the greatest culprits in Islām have been the “Salafis” and Wahhabīs in the wake of Ibn Taymiyya’s legacy. Finally, he exposes Ibn Taymiyya’s peculiar understanding of the basic elements of language such as prepositions, and reiterates the creed of *Ahl al-Sunna* one and all that Allāh Most High exists beyond any attribution of time, space, place, dimension, corporeality, and direction.

﴿عَالِمِ الْغَيْبِ وَالشَّهَادَةِ الْكَبِيرِ الْمُتَعَالِ﴾

الرعد ٩:١٣

﴿وَالرَّاسِخُونَ فِي الْعِلْمِ يَقُولُونَ آمَنَّا بِهِ كُلٌّ مِنْ عِنْدِ رَبِّنَا﴾

﴿وَمَا يَذَّكَّرُ إِلَّا أُولُو الْأَلْبَابِ﴾

آل عمران ٧:٣

{He is the Knower of the invisible and the visible,  
the Great, the High Exalted}

(13:9)

{And those who are of sound instruction say:  
We believe therein; the whole is from our Lord;  
but only people of understanding really heed}

(3:7)



## IBN TAYMIYYA'S LIFE AND TEACHINGS

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Aḥmad ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥalīm ibn ‘Abd Allāh ibn Abī al-Qāsim ibn Taymiyya, Taqī al-Dīn Abū al-‘Abbās ibn Shihāb al-Dīn ibn Majd al-Dīn al-Ḥarrānī al-Dimashqī al-Ḥanbalī (661-728) was one of the most influential scholars of the late Ḥanbalī school, praised by al-Dhahabī as “greater than his life can be illustrated by the like of myself” and by the ḥadīth Master Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-‘Alā’ī as “Our Shaykh, Master, and Imām between us and Allāh ﷻ, the master of verification, the wayfarer of the best path, the owner of the multifarious merits and overpowering proofs which all hosts agree are impossible to enumerate, the Shaykh, the Imām and faithful servant of his Lord, the doctor in the Religion, the Ocean, the light-giving Pole of spirituality, the leader of Imāms, the blessing of the Community, the sign-post of the people of knowledge, the inheritor of Prophets, the last of those capable of independent legal reasoning, the most unique of the scholars of the Religion, Shaykh al-Islām [...]” Later, both al-Dhahabī and al-‘Alā’ī changed their minds and the latter went on to list the matters in which Ibn Taymiyya went astray.

Al-‘Alā’ī’s Summary of  
Ibn Taymiyya’s Deviations

Ibn Ṭūlūn said in *Dhakhā’ir al-Qaṣr fī Tarājim Nubalā’ al-‘Aṣr*:

The ḥadīth Master Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-‘Alā’ī said: “List of the matters in which Ibn Taymiyya contravened the people [of knowledge] in the foundations and the branches. Among them are the matters in which he violated Consensus, and among them those in which he contravened the correct position in the [Ḥanbalī] School.

“Of those matters is the swearing of a [conditional] oath to divorce (*yamīn al-ṭalāq*). He said divorce does not take place when the condition of the oath is met but all that one has to do is pay or perform an expiation for perjury (*kaffārat yamīn*). Not one of the Jurists of the Muslims before him ever said that such an expiation was valid. He gave this *fatwā* for a long time. The matter grew such that huge masses of the uneducated public fell into imitating him and general disaster ensued. He also said that the divorce of a woman in menses does not take effect; nor does it take effect in the non-menstrual cycle either, if the husband has intercourse with his wife; that the triple divorce amounts to one, although he had reported the Consensus of the Muslims to the contrary in the matter, and said that whoever violates it



commits apostasy; then he violated it and caused a great many people to fall into the same violation.

“He also said that if one deliberately misses a prayer, it is not lawful to make it up; that a woman in menses may circumambulate the House without owing any expiation and that it is permissible for her; that taxes are licit to take by those who allocate them; that taxes taken from merchants fulfill their *zakāt* obligation even if not levied under the name, nor in the form, of *zakāt*; that liquids do not become impure if a mouse or the like dies in them; that the person in a state of major ritual impurity (*al-junub*) can pray his supererogatory night prayers with dry ablution (*tayammum*) and that he does not wait until he washes with water in order to pray if the time for *fajr* has entered, even if he is at home. I saw one of his imitators doing this and I forbade him to do it. [...] He was also asked about the sale of female slaves who gave birth to their master's child or children and he said it is correct and gave *fatwā* to that effect.

“Among the doctrinal positions which no one [in Sunni Islām] held but he, is that of ‘good and bad’ (*al-ḥusn wal-qubh*) [for Allāh], which is the belief of the Mu‘tazila. He adopted their position, defended it, wrote in support of it, and represented it as the Religion of Allāh [...]. Among his doctrinal positions is the claim that created matters subsist in Allāh – greatly exalted is He above what he claimed! – and that He is made of parts and needs a hand, an eye, a foot, and the like in the way the whole needs the part; that the Qur‘ān is created in His Essence; that the world is ‘generically pre-existent’ (*qadīmun bil-naw‘*) and that it was always with Allāh without beginning, created but everlasting, thus representing

Allāh as forced and not freely choosing to act – exalted is He, how patient and gentle He is! He also believed in the corporeality, direction, and displacement of Allāh Who is exalted beyond such things. He wrote in one of his books that Allāh is the same size as the Throne, neither larger nor smaller – exalted is Allāh beyond that! He authored a book stating that the knowledge of Allāh does not apply to infinities such as the bliss of the people of Paradise and that it does not encompass infinities. This is the issue over which the foot of the Imām slipped [*i.e.* Imām al-Ḥaramayn Ibn al-Juwaynī in his book *al-Burhān*].

“Among his lone doctrinal positions is the claim that Prophets are not immune to sin, that our Prophet ﷺ has no special status before Allāh, and that he cannot be used as an intermediary except if someone is mistakenly doing so. He authored many pages on this. He also said that the undertaking of travel to the Prophet ﷺ in order to visit him is a sin and that it is unlawful to shorten the prayers during such travel. He insisted on this a great deal. None of the Muslims ever said this before him.

“He also said that the punishment of the people of the Fire will come to an end and not last eternally. Among his lone positions also is that the actual words of the Torah and the Gospel were not substituted (*lam tubaddal*) but remain in the exact same form in which they had been revealed, and that corruption (*al-tahrīf*) took place only with regard to their interpretation (*ta’wilihā*). He authored a book on this.

“This is the last that I saw in the matter. I ask forgiveness of Allāh for writing such things, besides strenuously clearing myself of holding them!”

## His Teachers and Students

A student of Ibn ‘Abd al-Dā’im, al-Qāsim al-Irbilī, Ibn ‘Allān, and Ibn Abī ‘Amr al-Fakhr, Ibn Taymiyya mostly read by himself until he achieved great learning. Shaykh al-Islām, al-Ḥāfiẓ al-Taqī al-Subkī said: “He memorized a lot and did not discipline himself with a shaykh.”<sup>19</sup> He taught, authored books, gave formal legal opinions, and generally distinguished himself for his quick wit and photographic memory.

Among his most noted students were the ḥadīth masters Ibn al-Qayyim, the closest student; al-Dhahabī, the senior companion by far; Ibn Kathīr and Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ibn ‘Abd al-Hādī al-Maqdisī, who were both in their twenties when he died; and the Ḥanbalī jurist and ḥadīth narrator Sirāj al-Dīn Abū Ḥafṣ ‘Umar ibn ‘Alī ibn Mūsā al-Azjī al-Bazzār (688-749) who should not be confused with the ḥāfiẓ Abū Bakr al-Bazzār (215-292).

<sup>19</sup> Al-Subkī, *Fatāwā* cited in his *al-I‘tibār* (3rd epistle of *al-Durrat al-Muḍiyya* p. 59). The Scholars said, as a rule, “Do not take knowledge from someone who took his knowledge from books.” Cf. al-Zabīdī, *Ithāf al-Sādat al-Muttaqīn* (1:67).

## Divided Opinions Concerning Him

Ibn Taymiyya's views and manners created intense controversy both during his lifetime and after his death. Ibn Rajab relates that 'Imād al-Dīn al-Wāsiṭī admired Ibn Taymiyya to the point that he swore to his greatness and studied under him although older than him, yet "he and a group of his close companions at times condemned what they heard the Shaykh say against some of the major great Imāms or against the ascetics and so forth."<sup>20</sup> Al-Sakhāwī in *al-I'lān wal-Tawbīkh* (p. 61) noted: "Certain people gave rise to disavowal and a general reluctance to make use of their knowledge despite their stature in knowledge, pious scrupulousness, and asceticism. The reason for this was the looseness of their tongues and their tactlessness in blunt speech and excessive criticism, such as Ibn Ḥazm and Ibn Taymiyya, who were subsequently tried and harmed."

An illustration of Ibn Taymiyya's ambivalent status is the fact that, although the Shāfi'ī ḥadīth Master al-Mizzī did not call anyone else "Shaykh al-Islām" in his time besides Ibn Taymiyya, Ibn Abī 'Umar al-Ḥanbalī, and Imām Taqī al-Dīn al-Subkī,<sup>21</sup> the Ḥanafī Scholar 'Alā' al-Dīn al-Bukhārī issued a *fatwā* that if

<sup>20</sup> Ibn Rajab, *Dhayl Ṭabaqāt al-Ḥanābila* (2:394).

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Ibn al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Shafi'iyya al-Kubrā* (10:195) and al-Sakhāwī's introduction to *al-Jawāhir wal-Durar*.

anyone called Ibn Taymiyya "Shaykh al-Islām" they would commit disbelief<sup>22</sup> and authored against the latter a book titled *al-Muljima lil-Mujassima* ("Curbing the Anthropomorphists").<sup>23</sup>

Ibn Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Dimashqī countered this *fatwā* by authoring *al-Radd al-Wāfir*, in which he listed all the authorities who had ever written in praise of Ibn Taymiyya or called him Shaykh al-Islām. Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī in his certificate (*taqrīz*) on *al-Radd al-Wāfir* wrote: "Nevertheless, he was a human being who sometimes erred and sometimes was right. Whatever he was right in – and this is the greater part – is available for benefit and is a cause for our asking for mercy for him. Whatever he erred in, he should not be imitated in it; rather, he is excused." Shaykh ʿAbd al-Fattāḥ Abū Ghudda in his book *al-ʿUlamāʾ al-ʿUzzāb* includes Ibn Taymiyya among the scholars who never married and names him "Shaykh al-Islām and the Standard-Bearer of all standard-bearers."

<sup>22</sup> Cf. al-Sakhāwī, *al-Ḍawʾ al-Lāmiʾ* (9:292) and Ḥajji Khalifa, *Kashf al-Zunūn* (1:838).

<sup>23</sup> Cf. al-Kawtharī, *Maqālāt* (p. 413).

## Al-Dhahabī's Synopsis of His Case

In *Bayān Zaghl al-'Ilm* al-Dhahabī writes:

If you were to excel in the Principles (*al-Uṣūl*) and their affiliates – logic, ethics, philosophy, the sayings of the ancients and the conundrums – all the while protecting yourself with the Book and the Sunna as well as the doctrines of the *Salaf*, then joined between reason and transmission, still, I do not think you would reach the level of Ibn Taymiyya. No, by Allāh! You would not even come near it. Yet, I saw what happened to him – how much opposition he faced, desertion, rightful and wrongful declarations of heresy, apostasy, and mendacity! Before he entered into this science [*i.e.* Islamic Doctrine], he was shining with light and enlightening others, bearing the marks of the *Salaf* on his face. Then he became lightless, dark and somber to countless droves of people, a wicked Anti-Christ and disbeliever according to his enemies, while great numbers of the wise and the elite considered him an eminent, brilliant, and scholarly innovator (*mubtadi' fāḍil muḥaqqiq bāri'*), while the commonality of his uneducated friends, one and all, deemed him the standard-bearer of Islām, the defender of the Religion, and the reviver of the Sunna.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Al-Dhahabī, *Bayān Zaghl al-'Ilm* (p. 23-24), also cited in al-Sakhāwī, *al-I' lān* (p. 78).

Al-Dhahabī in the *‘Ibar*, after praising his teacher, states: “He also had some strange opinions on account of which he was attacked.”<sup>25</sup> Muḥammad Ibn ‘Abd al-Hādī in *al-‘Uqūd al-Durriyya* makes a similarly meandrous admission that his teacher committed innovation: “He gave vent to certain expressions which early and late Scholars never dared use while he boldly indulged them.”<sup>26</sup>

In his biographical monograph *al-Durrat al-Yatīmiyya fīl-Sīrat al-Taymiyya*, al-Dhahabī reports that Ibn Daqīq al-‘Īd – the Renewer of the seventh century – said, upon meeting with Ibn Taymiyya: “I saw a man with all the sciences [laid open] before his eyes, taking what he wished and leaving what he wished.” Asked why he did not debate him, Ibn Daqīq al-‘Īd answered: “Because he loves to speak (*yuḥibbu al-kalām*) and I love silence.”<sup>27</sup>

“He was Very Learned  
but Lacked Intelligence”

Imām Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Ṣafadī said: “The Shaykh, Imām, and erudite scholar Taqī al-Dīn Aḥmad ibn Taymiyya – Allāh have mercy on him! – was immensely learned but he had a defective intelligence (*‘aqluhu nāqīṣ*) that embroiled him in perils and made him fall into hardships.”<sup>28</sup>

<sup>25</sup> Al-Dhahabī, *al-‘Ibar* (4:84).

<sup>26</sup> Ibn ‘Abd al-Hādī, *al-‘Uqūd al-Durriyya* (p. 117).

<sup>27</sup> As cited by Abū Ghudda in *al-‘Ulamā’ al-‘Uzzāb* (p. 169) from Ibn al-Wardī’s citation of al-Dhahabī in his *Tatimmat al-Mukhtaṣar fī Akhbār al-Bashar* (2:406-413).

<sup>28</sup> Al-Ṣafadī, *Sharḥ Lāmiyyat al-‘Ajam lil-Tuḡhrā’ī*, in al-Nabhānī, *Shawāhid* (p. 189).

The Ḥanbalis' Prohibition  
Against Him Giving *Fatwā*

Ibn Rajab wrote:

Large groups of the Imāms of *Ahl al-Ḥadīth* and their ḥadīth Masters and Jurists loved the Shaykh and venerated him but they disliked that he was involved with the theologians and philosophers, for uninvolvement was the way of the early Imāms of *Ahl al-Ḥadīth* such as al-Shāfi'ī, Aḥmad, Iṣḥāq, Abū 'Ubayd and the like. Similarly, many of the Ulema among the Jurists, the ḥadīth Scholars, and the righteous hated his idiosyncratic promotion of certain aberrant matters which the *Salaf* had condemned together with those who promoted them, to the point that one of the judges among our companions forbade him to give *fatwā* in some of those instances.<sup>29</sup>

In his brief *Radd 'alā man Ittaba'a Ghayr al-Madhāhib al-Arba'a*, in which he castigates anyone that claims *ijtihād* outside the Four Sunni Schools, Ibn Rajab unmistakably points the finger at Ibn Taymiyya when he writes: "Do not pass judgement on all Divisions of the Believers as if you were given knowledge they were not or reached a state that they did not!"

<sup>29</sup> Ibn Rajab, *Dhayl Ṭabaqāt al-Ḥanābila* (2:394).



The *Fatwā Ḥamawiyya*  
Attributing Direction to Allāh ﷻ

His first clash with the scholars occurred in 698 in Damascus when he was barred from teaching after he issued his *Fatwā Ḥamawiyya* in which he unambiguously attributes literal upward direction to Allāh ﷻ.<sup>30</sup> He was refuted by his contemporary, Imām Ibn Jahbal al-Kilābī (d. 733) in a lengthy reply – translated in this book – which Tāj al-Dīn al-Subkī reproduced in full in *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfi‘īyya al-Kubrā*. Ibn Jahbal wrote: “How can you say that Allāh is literally (*ḥaqīqatan*) in (*fī*) the heaven, and literally above (*fawq*) the heaven, and literally in (*fī*) the Throne, and literally on (*‘alā*) the Throne??”<sup>31</sup>

Qāḍī Yūsuf al-Nabhānī also refuted the *Ḥamawiyya* in his magnificent epistle *Raf‘ al-Ishtibāh fī Istihālat al-Jiha ‘alā Allāh* (“The Removal of Uncertainty Concerning the Impossibility of Direction for Allāh ﷻ”) cited in full in his *Shawāhid al-Ḥaqq*.

Muḥammad Sa‘īd ibn ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Baghdādī al-Naqshbandī (d. 1339) wrote another refutation, as of yet unpublished, titled *al-Wajh fī Ibtāl al-Jiha* in thirty-six folios.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>30</sup> There had been a precedent to the scandal as early as 690 cf. Ibn Rajab, *Dhayl Ṭabaqāt al-Ḥanābilā* (2:389).

<sup>31</sup> See below (§113) cf. Ibn al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfi‘īyya al-Kubrā* (9:61).

<sup>32</sup> Cf. ‘Imād ‘Abd al-Salām Ra‘ūf, *al-Āthār al-Khaṭṭiyya fīl-Maktabat al-Qādiriyya fī Baghdād* (2:493 ms. 642).

Imām al-Kawtharī penned another refutation, *Khuṭūrat al-Qawli bil-Jiha* (“The Gravity of the Doctrine that Attributes Direction [to Allāh ﷻ]”) in which he reports al-Bayāḍī’s explanation of Imām Abū Ḥanīfa’s statement: “Whoever says ‘I do not know whether my Lord is in the heaven or on earth’ is a disbeliever and, similarly, whoever says, ‘He is on the Throne and I do not know whether the Throne is in the heaven or on earth’ is a disbeliever.”<sup>33</sup> Al-Bayāḍī said in *Ishārāt al-Marām*:

This is because he implies that the Creator has a direction and a boundary, and anything that possesses direction and boundary is necessarily created. So this statement explicitly attributes imperfection to Allāh ﷻ. The believer in [Divine] corporeality and direction is someone who denies the existence of anything other than objects that can be pointed to with the senses. They deny the Essence of the Deity Who is transcendent beyond that. This makes them positively guilty of disbelief.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>33</sup> In *al-Fiqh al-Absaṭ* (“The Greatest Wisdom”), the same work as the *Fiqh al-Akbar* but in catechistic form narrated from the Imām exclusively by Abū Muṭī‘ al-Ḥakam ibn ‘Abd Allāh ibn Muslim al-Balkhī al-Khurāsānī through Abū ‘Abd Allāh al-Ḥusayn ibn ‘Alī al-Alma‘ī al-Kāshgharī (d. >484), both of them discarded as narrators.

<sup>34</sup> Al-Kawtharī, *Maqālāt* (p. 368-369).

## His Several Imprisonments

Ibn Taymiyya then returned to his activities until he was summoned by the authorities again in 705 to answer for his *'Aqīda Wāsiṭiyya*. He spent the following few years in and out of jail in Cairo and Damascus or defending himself from various "abhorrent charges" according to Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī. Because he officially repented, his life was spared, although at one point it was proclaimed in Damascus that "Whoever follows the beliefs of Ibn Taymiyya, his life and property are licit for seizure."

These events instigated great dissension among the scholars in Damascus and Cairo as detailed by the Shāfiʿī Imām Taqī al-Dīn al-Ḥiṣnī (d. 829) in his *Dafʿ Shubahi Man Shabbaha wa-Tamarrad*.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>35</sup> Published in Cairo at Dār Iḥyāʾ al-Kutub al-ʿArabiyya, 1931.

## His Equivocations Under Interrogation

Ibn Taymiyya at various times declared himself a follower of the Shāfi'ī school – as did many Ḥanbalis in Damascus – and an Ash'arī. Ibn Ḥajar wrote in *al-Durar al-Kāmina*:


An investigation [of his views] was conducted by several scholars and a written statement was drawn up in which he said: "I am Ash'arī."<sup>36</sup> We find in his handwriting, verbatim: "I believe that the Qur'ān is a meaning which exists in the Divine Essence, and that it is an Attribute from the pre-eternal Attributes of His Essence, and that it is uncreated, and that it does not consist in the letter nor the voice, and that His saying: {*The Merciful established Himself over the Throne*} (20:5) is not meant literally (*laysa 'alā zāhirihi*), and I do not know of what consists its meaning but only Allāh knows it, and one speaks of His 'descent' in the same way as one speaks of His 'establishment.' It was written by Aḥmad ibn Taymiyya." They witnessed that he had repented of his own free will from everything that contravened the above. This took place on the 25th of Rabī' al-Awwal 707 and it was witnessed by a huge array of scholars and others.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>36</sup> Cf. al-Ḥiṣnī, *Daf' Shubah* (p. 43-45).

<sup>37</sup> The names of the scholars who counter-signed Ibn Taymiyya's deposition are listed by al-Kawtharī in his notes to Ibn al-Subkī's *al-Sayf al-Ṣāqil* (p. 95-96).

Al-Ṭūfi's Summary of  
Ibn Taymiyya's Deviations

The Ḥanbalī scholar of prodigious memory, specialist of principles, canonical readings, Qur'ān commentary, Ḥanbalī and Shāfi'ī jurisprudence, belles-lettres and medicine, Najm al-Dīn Sulaymān ibn 'Abd al-Qawī al-Ṭūfi (657-716)<sup>38</sup> – whom al-Dhahabī admired – said:<sup>39</sup>

He [Ibn Taymiyya] could bring up in one hour from the Book, the Sunna, the Arabic language, and philosophical speculation, material which no one could bring up even in many sessions, as if these sciences were before his very eyes and he was picking and choosing from them at will. A time came when his companions took to over-praising him and this drove him to be satisfied with himself until he became conceited before his fellow human beings. He became convinced that he was a scholar capable of independent reasoning (*mujtahid*). Henceforth he began to answer each and every scholar great and small, past and recent, until he went all the way back to 'Umar  and faulted him in some matter. This reached the ears of Shaykh Ibrāhīm al-Rāqī who reprimanded him. Ibn Taymiyya went to see him, apologized, and

<sup>38</sup> Obitus per Ibn 'Imād and Ibn Ḥajar while later biographers said 710.

<sup>39</sup> In Ibn Ḥajar's *al-Durar al-Kāmina* (1:153-155).

asked forgiveness. He also spoke against ‘Alī ﷺ and said: “He made mistakes in seventeen different matters.” [...]

Because of his fanatic support of the Ḥanbalī School he attacked the Ash‘arīs until he started to insult al-Ghazzālī, at which point some people opposed him and almost killed him. [...] They asserted that he had blurted out certain words concerning doctrine which came out of his mouth in the course of his sermons and legal pronouncements. They mentioned that he had cited the ḥadīth of the descent of Allāh ﷻ (to the nearest heaven), then climbed down two steps from the pulpit and said: “Just like this descent of mine” and so was branded as an anthropomorphist. They also cited his censure of whoever uses the Prophet ﷺ as an intermediary or seeks help from him (*aw istaghātha*). [...]

People were divided into parties because of him. Some considered him an anthropomorphist because of what he mentioned in *al-‘Aqīda al-Ḥamawīyya*, *al-‘Aqīda al-Wāṣitiyya*, and other books of his, to the effect that the Hand, Foot, Shin, and Face are literal Attributes of Allāh and that He is established upon the Throne with His Essence. It was said to him that were this the case, He would necessarily be subject to spatial confinement (*al-taḥayyuz*) and divisibility (*al-inqisām*). He replied: “I do not concede that spatial confinement and divisibility are necessarily properties of bodies,” so it was concluded against him (*ulzima*) that he held the Divine Essence to be subject to spatial confinement. Others considered him a heretic (*zindīq*) due to his saying that the Prophet ﷺ is not to be sought for help and the fact that this amounted to diminishing and undermining the greatness of the Prophet ﷺ. [...] Others considered him a secret dis-

believer (*munāfiq*) because of what he said about 'Alī: [...] namely, that he had been forsaken everywhere he went, had repeatedly tried to acquire the caliphate and never attained it, fought out of lust for power rather than religion, and said that "he loved leadership while 'Uthmān loved money." He would say that Abū Bakr had declared Islām in his old age, fully aware of what he said, while 'Alī had declared Islām as a boy, and a boy's Islām is not considered sound upon his mere word. [...] In sum, he said ugly things such as these, and it was said against him that he was a hypocrite, in view of the Prophet's ﷺ saying (to 'Alī): "Only a hypocrite has hatred for you."<sup>40</sup>

Al-Bukhārī narrated that the Prophet ﷺ came in and saw 'Alī and Fāṭima sleeping, whereupon he said: "Are you not praying?" 'Alī said: "Our souls are in the Hand of Allāh..." The Prophet ﷺ walked away, slapping his thigh and saying {*Man disputes much*} (18:54). Ibn Taymiyya commented in his *Fatāwā* (15:229): "This is blameworthy disputation [...] and is one of the kinds of arguments used by the Qadariyya sect." Such an explanation has no precedent.

<sup>40</sup> Narrated from 'Alī by Muslim, al-Tirmidhī, al-Nasa'ī, and Aḥmad.

His Former Admiration of  
Shaykh Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn ‘Arabī

Another reason why Ibn Taymiyya was opposed was his disrespect of Sufis, particularly Shaykh Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn ‘Arabī, although he described himself, in his letter to the Sufi Shaykh Abū al-Faṭḥ Naṣr al-Manbijī, as a former admirer of the Shaykh al-Akbar:

From Aḥmad ibn Taymiyya to the Shaykh, the Knower, the Exemplar, the Wayfarer, the Worshipful Abū al-Faṭḥ Naṣr [...]. I was previously one of those who used to hold the best opinion of Ibn ‘Arabī and extol his praise, because of the benefits I saw in his works, such as what he said in many of his books, for example: *al-Futūḥāt*, *al-Kunh*, *al-Muḥkam al-Marbūṭ*, *al-Durrat al-Fākhira*, *Maṭālī‘ al-Nujūm*, and other such works.<sup>41</sup>

Ibn Taymiyya also acknowledged the reality of the God-given, extraordinary spiritual unveilings or *kashf* that take place at the hands of the Friends of Allāh, saying: “It is established that the *awliyā* possess spiritual communications and unveilings” (*faqad thabata anna li-awliyā’ Allāhi mukhāṭabātin wa-mukāshafāt*).<sup>42</sup>

<sup>41</sup> Ibn Taymiyya, *Tawḥīd al-Rubūbiyya* in *Majmū‘ al-Fatāwā* (2:452, 464-465). After he finished reading the letter, Shaykh Abū al-Faṭḥ al-Manbijī had King Baybars Jāshangīr arrest Ibn Taymiyya and incarcerate him.

<sup>42</sup> Ibn Taymiyya, *al-Furqān* (p. 52).



In our time, most of his purported followers and imitators as well as modernists reject this miraculous and, in their view, elitist aspect of Islām under the misguided impression that it suggests that the Prophetic Dispensation needs additions or completions! A "Salafi" editor even takes Yūsuf ibn 'Abd al-Hādī to task for expressing his belief in *kashf*.<sup>43</sup>

### His Sufi Affiliation With the Qādirī *Ṭarīqa*

The Ḥanbalī Sufi Yūsuf ibn al-Ḥasan ibn 'Abd al-Hādī, known as Ibn al-Mibrad (d. 909), in his *Bad' al-'Ilqa bi-Labs al-Khirqa* narrates Ibn Taymiyya's declaration that he is a follower of several Sufi paths, among them the Qādirī path of Shaykh 'Abd al-Qādir al-Gilānī: "I have worn the Sufi cloak (*khirqat al-taṣawwuf*) of a number of Shaykhs belonging to various *ṭarīqas* (*min ṭuruqi jamā'atin min al-shuyūkh*), among them Shaykh 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jilī, whose *ṭarīqa* is the greatest of the well-known ones" and again: "The greatest *ṭarīqa* (*ajallu al-ṭuruq*) is that of my Master (*sayyidi*) Shaykh 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jilī."<sup>44</sup>

<sup>43</sup> Jāsim al-Dawsarī in his notes on Yūsuf ibn 'Abd al-Hādī's *al-Qawā'id al-Kulliyya* (Bashā'ir ed. p. 29).

<sup>44</sup> See George Makdisī, "Lisnād initiatique soufi de Muwaffaq ad-Dīn Ibn Qudāma," in *Cahiers de l'Herne: Louis Massignon* (Paris: Editions de l'Herne, 1970) p. 88-96; "Ibn Taimiya: A Sufi of the Qadiriya Order," in *American Journal of Arabic Studies I* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1974) p. 118-129; and "The Ḥanbalī School and Sufism," in *Boletín de la Asociación Española de Orientalistas 15* (Madrid, 1979) p. 115-126. Based on Ibn 'Abd al-Hādī's *Bad' al-'Ilqa bi-Labs al-Khirqa*, ms. al-Hādī, Princeton Library Arabic Collection, fos. 154a, 169b, 171b-172a; and Damascus University, copy of original Arabic manuscript, 985H; also mentioned in al-Ṭalyānī cf. below.

Ibn 'Abd al-Hādī cites Ibn Taymiyya's *Sufi silsila* thus:

- i. 'Abd al-Qādir al-Gilānī
- ii.-iii. Abū 'Umar ibn Qudāma and Muwaffaq al-Dīn ibn Qudāma
- iv. Ibn Abī 'Umar ibn Qudāma
- v. Ibn Taymiyya
- vi. Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya
- vii. Ibn Rajab

[§ii. and §iii. both received the *khirqā* from al-Gilānī himself.]

Ibn Taymiyya gave further corroboration of "only two links" separating him from Shaykh 'Abd al-Qādir al-Gilānī in *al-Maṣ'alat al-Tabrīziyya* where he declares: "I wore the blessed Sufi cloak of 'Abd al-Qādir, there being between him and me two Shaykhs (*Labistu al-khirqat al-mubāraka lil-Shaykh 'Abd al-Qādir wa-baynī wa-baynahu ithnān*)."<sup>45</sup> This is quoted in a unique manuscript of the work *Targhib al-Mutaḥabbīn fī Labs Khirqat al-Mutamayyizīn* by Jamāl al-Dīn at-Ṭalyānī.<sup>46</sup>

On Shaykh 'Abd al-Qādir's *Futūḥ al-Ghayb*, Ibn Taymiyya wrote a hundred-page partial commentary covering only five of the seventy-eight sermons of the book.<sup>47</sup> The substance of this commentary aims to show that orthodox *taṣawwuf* is in consonance with Qur'ān and Ḥadīth and the Consensus of the Community.<sup>48</sup>

<sup>45</sup> Ms. Damascus, Zāhiriyya §1186 H.

<sup>46</sup> Al-Ṭalyānī, manuscript Chester Beatty 3296 (8) in Dublin, f° 67a.

<sup>47</sup> The commentary is found in the tenth volume of the first Riyadh edition of the *Majmū' Fatāwā Ibn Taymiyya* (10:455-548). It is published in full [200 p.] as *Sharḥ Futūḥ al-Ghayb lil-Imām al-Rabbānī 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jilānī* (Damascus: Dār al-Qādirī, 1995).

<sup>48</sup> As Ibn al-Qayyim wrote in his poem *al-Nūniyya*: "Ahl al-Ḥadīth, all of them, and the Imāms of *Fatwā* are Sufis!"

Insofar as the goal of *taṣawwuf* is the purification of the heart by progress through states (*aḥwāl*) and stations (*maqāmāt*), Ibn Taymiyya in *al-Tuḥfat al-ʿIrāqiyya* (al-Zarqāʾ, Jordan 1978, p.18) imitated Imām al-Ghazālī's *fatwā* in *al-Munqidh min al-Dalāl* in considering *taṣawwuf* obligatory upon every Muslim, naming it *aʿmāl al-qulūb*.

## His Innovative Nullification of Triple Divorce

Further charges of heresy were brought against Ibn Taymiyya for his assertions on divorce pronounced in innovative fashion in violation of Consensus. He held that:

- (1) a threefold formulation of divorce in a single sitting counted as one;
- (2) divorce pronounced at the time of menses did not take effect; and
- (3) swearing a vow to divorce could be taken back through expiation (*kaffāra*), in violation of the Consensus of the Four Imāms and others of the *Salaf*.<sup>49</sup>

Following this, 'Alā' al-Dīn al-Bukhārī issued his infamous *fatwā*. Shaykh al-Islām Taqī al-Subkī said: "Ibn Taymiyya has spread deceit in [affirming] the existence of a difference of opinion in the matter [of divorce], which is a lie, a fabrication, and impudence on his part against Islām. [...] It has been affirmed by many of the Scholars that he who opposes the Consensus (*al-ijmā'*) of the Community is a disbeliever (*kāfir*)."<sup>50</sup>

<sup>49</sup> The Ḥanbalī *Madhhab* disagrees with him on the first two points but agrees with him on the third cf. Ibn Qudāma, *Kāfi* (4:419), Majd al-Dīn Ibn Taymiyya, *Muḥarrar* (2:199-200), al-Mardāwī, *Inṣāf* (11:121), al-Buhūtī, *Rawḍ* (3:377), Ibn Muflīh, *Mubdī'* (9:328), al-Ḥajjāwī, *Zād al-Mustaḥṣin* (p. 245).

<sup>50</sup> Al-Subkī, *al-Durrat al-Muḍīyya fīl-Radd 'alā Ibn Taymiyya* (1<sup>st</sup> epistle, *Naqd al-Ijtima'* p. 12, 14).

Ibn Rajab Supports then  
Rejects His *Fatwā* on Divorce

Ibn Rajab first wrote *al-Aḥādīth wal-Āthār al-Mutazā'ida fī anna al-Ṭalāqa al-Thalāthata Wāḥida* in which he supported Ibn Taymiyya's position that a triple divorce in one sitting counts as one divorce. Then, after further analyzing the ḥadīths relevant to the topic, he revised his position and issued his *Mushkil al-Aḥādīth al-Wārida anna al-Ṭalāqa al-Thalāthata Wāḥida* in which he refuted Ibn Taymiyya's position with the words:

Know that nothing explicit whatsoever is established as authentic from any of the Companions, nor any of the Successors, nor any of the Imāms of the *Salaf*, whose word is relied upon in *ḥalāl* and *ḥarām fatwās*, that a triple divorce after consummation counts as one when pronounced in a single formula.<sup>51</sup>

Ibn Ḥajar relates, "Ibn Rajab was criticized for giving *fatwā* according to the positions of Ibn Taymiyya but when he dissociated himself from them the Taymiyyans ostracized him."<sup>52</sup>

In his defense of Ibn Taymiyya titled *Sayr al-Ḥāthth ilā 'Ilm al-Ṭalāq al-Thalāth*, Yūsuf Ibn 'Abd al-Hādī disputed the above summation by Ibn Rajab although he readily admitted that "the

<sup>51</sup> In Yūsuf Ibn 'Abd al-Hādī, *Sayr al-Ḥāthth* (p. 31).

<sup>52</sup> Ibn Ḥajar, *Inbā' al-Ghumr bi-A' mār al-'Umr* (3:176).

position that the triple divorce counts as three divorces is the sound and true position of the [Ḥanbalī] School” and that it is that of “Aḥmad, al-Shāfi‘ī, Abū Ḥanīfa, Mālik, al-Thawrī, Ibn Abī Laylā, and al-Awzā‘ī [...] and in Ibn al-Mundhīr’s *al-Ijmā‘* is an indication that there is Consensus over it although not explicit.”<sup>53</sup> Ibn al-Mundhir did cite Consensus that if a man tells his wife “You are divorced three times less two” she is divorced once, and that if he tells her “You are divorced three times less one” she is divorced twice. Further, explicit Consensus is cited that three divorces in a single sitting count as three by:

- (1) Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr in *al-Istidhkār* as quoted by Ibn Qaṭṭān al-Fāsī in his encyclopedia of Consensus titled *al-Iqnā‘ fī Masā’il al-Ijmā‘*;
- (2) Ibn Hubayra in *al-Ijmā‘ ‘inda A‘immat Ahl al-Sunnati al-Arba‘a*; and
- (3) Ibn Ḥajar in *Fatḥh al-Bārī*.<sup>54</sup>

### His Prohibition of Travel to Visit the Prophet ﷺ

After spending the years 719-721 in jail, Ibn Taymiyya was jailed again in 726 until his death two years later amid charges of *kuf̣r* for declaring – without precedent in Islām – that one who travels to visit the Holy Prophet ﷺ commits a prohibition (*ḥarām*), a sin (*ma‘ṣiya*), and an innovation (*bid‘a*).

<sup>53</sup> Yūsuf Ibn ‘Abd al-Hādī, *Sayr al-Ḥāthith* (p. 21-22).

<sup>54</sup> Ibn al-Mundhir, *Ijmā‘* (p. 66 §413-414), Ibn Qaṭṭān, *Iqnā‘* (3:1268-1272 §2317), Ibn Hubayra, *Ijmā‘* (p. 159), Ibn Ḥajar, *Fatḥh* (9:365).

The Ḥanbalī  
Rejection of this *Fatwā*

Al-Mardāwī, Ibn Hubayra, and others stated that the entirety of the early and late authorities in the Ḥanbalī *Madhhab* stipulate the desirability (*istiḥbāb*) of visiting the grave of the Prophet ﷺ in Madīna, most especially after Ḥajj, and/or traveling to do so.<sup>55</sup> Ibn Muflīḥ, al-Mardāwī, and Mar'ī ibn Yūsuf in *Ghāyat al-Muntahā* stated the Sunna character of visiting the graves of the Muslims and the permissibility (*ibāḥa*) of traveling to do so. Mar'ī reiterates this ruling in his unpublished monograph on the ethics of graves and visitation, *Shifā' al-Ṣudūr fī Ziyārat al-Mashāhid wal-Qubūr*.<sup>56</sup>

<sup>55</sup> Ibn Qudāma, *al-Mughnī* (3:117, 3:297, 5:465), *al-Muqni'* (1:466), *al-Kāfi* (1:619); Ibn Muflīḥ, *al-Mubdi' fī Sharḥ al-Muqni'* (3:259); al-Buhūti, *Kashshāf al-Qinā'* (2:514-515; 5:36), *al-Rawḍ al-Murba'* (1:522); Ibn Dawyān, *Manār al-Sabīl* (1:256); Shams al-Dīn ibn Muflīḥ, *Furū'* (3:523); al-Ḥajjāwī, *Iqnā'* (1:395); 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Ba'li, *Kashf al-Mukhaddarāt* (p. 193); Mar'ī, *Ghāyat al-Muntahā* (1:418), *Dalīl al-Ṭalīb* (p. 88); Aḥmad al-Ba'li, *al-Rawḍ al-Nadī* (p. 190); Bahā' al-Dīn al-Maqdisī, *al-'Udda Sharḥ al-'Umda* (p. 209); Ibn al-Najjār, *Muntahā al-Irādāt* (1:286); Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Madhhab al-Aḥmad* (p. 68); Shams al-Dīn Ibn Qudāma, *al-Sharḥ al-Kabīr* (3:494); al-Kalwādhānī, *Hidāya* (p. 105); Ibn Hubayra, *Ifṣāḥ* (1:297), al-Mardāwī, *Inṣāf* (4:53).

<sup>56</sup> A ninety-folio Ḥāhiriyya ms. 8349 as per Riyāḍ Māliḥ, *Faḥras Makḥṭūṭāt Maktabat al-Zāhiriyya fīl-Taṣawwuf* (2:229 §1317) cf. Ibn Muflīḥ, *Mubdi'* (2:107), Mar'ī, *Ghāya* (1:258), al-Mardāwī, *Inṣāf* (2:317).

Shaykh al-Islām al-Subkī's  
Rejection of this *Fatwā*

This most notorious of all Taymiyyan *fatwās* was refuted by Ibn Taymiyya's contemporary the ḥadīth Master and Shaykh al-Islām Taqī al-Dīn al-Subkī in his landmark book *Shifā' al-Siqām fī Ziyārati Khayr al-Anām* ("The Healing of Sickness Concerning the Visitation to the Best of Creatures") also titled *Shann al-Ghāra 'alā man Ankara al-Safar lil-Ziyāra* ("The Raid Against Him [Ibn Taymiyya] Who Denied the Lawfulness of Travel for the Purpose of Visitation"). Shaykh al-Islām adduced the ḥadīth "Whoever visits my grave, my intercession will be guaranteed for him" as proof against Ibn Taymiyya's claim that "all the ḥadīths that concern the merit of visitation are weak or rather forged"<sup>57</sup> and denounced Ibn Taymiyya's unprecedented *fatwā* as a flagrant innovation.

<sup>57</sup> A claim heedlessly imitated by Ibn Taymiyya's followers in our time. On the ḥadīth see further down (p. 59).



Shaykh al-Islām al-‘Irāqī’s  
Rejection of this *Fatwā*

Imām Abū al-Faḍl Zayn al-Dīn ‘Abd al-Raḥīm ibn al-Ḥusayn al-‘Irāqī al-Miṣrī (725-806), Shaykh al-Islām, the Imām, Qāḍī of Cairo, ḥadīth Master of his time, and principal teacher of the ḥadīth Master Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī, said in *al-Ajwibat al-Makkiyya*, a refutation of Ibn Taymiyya’s *fatwā* claiming the prohibition of travel to visit the Prophet ﷺ: “There is no *tahrīm* (prohibition) of an act of travel in the ḥadīth [“Mounts are not to be saddled except to travel to three mosques”]; rather, it is an emphasis on the importance of traveling to these three mosques in particular, and the emphasis becomes an obligation in case of a vow (*nadhr*), which is not the case for a vow to pray in any mosque other than these three.”<sup>58</sup>

Al-‘Irāqī further reacted to Ibn Taymiyya’s claim that it was an innovation in the Religion to show generosity to relatives on the day of ‘Āshūrā<sup>59</sup> with the words: “I find it strange that such words should come from this Imām, whose followers say that he has encompassed the Sunna in knowledge and practice [...]. One who has not heard of something should not deny that it exists!” Al-‘Irāqī then proceeded to show that, on the contrary, it was a Sunna based on sound narrations from the Prophet ﷺ as

<sup>58</sup> Cf. al-‘Irāqī, *Ṭarḥ al-Tathrīb* (6:43).

<sup>59</sup> Cf. Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmū‘ al-Fatāwā* (25:299-300) and his *Minhāj* (Sālim ed. 7:39).

well as the Companions and the Imāms of the Successors and the succeeding generations.<sup>60</sup>

Shaykh al-Islām Ibn Ḥajar's  
Rejection of this *Fatwā*

Imām Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī in *Fatḥ al-Bārī* said of Ibn Taymiyya's *fatwā* prohibiting travel in order to visit the Prophet ﷺ: "This is one of the ugliest matters ever reported from him."<sup>61</sup>

Ḥāfiẓ al-Ṣafadī's  
Rejection of this *Fatwā*

Al-Ṣafadī said:

Ibn Taymiyya gilded his statement  
Concerning the visit to the Best of Creation,  
Whereupon souls came in droves to complain  
To the best of scholars and purest of Imāms [*i.e.* al-Subkī]  
Who compiled this book, providing them with a cure  
And so it was indeed The Healing of Sickness.

<sup>60</sup> See al-ʿIrāqī's *fatwā* in al-Nabhānī's *Shawāhid al-Ḥaqq* (p. 192-195) and its expurgated wording in the modern editions of Ibn Nāṣir al-Dīn's *al-Radd al-Wāfir* (p. 108).

<sup>61</sup> *Fatḥ al-Bārī* (1989 ed. 3:66). In his marginalia on that work the "Salafī" muftī Ibn Bāz comments: "This was not an ugly thing but a correct thing for Ibn Taymiyya to say!"

Ḥāfiẓ al-Qārī's  
Rejection of this *Fatwā*

Al-Qārī said in his commentary on 'Iyād's *al-Shifā'*:

Ibn Taymiyya – one of the Ḥanbalīs – committed excess when he declared it prohibited to travel to visit the Prophet ﷺ just as others also committed excess in saying that it is obligatory in the Religion to know that the Visitation is an act by which one draws near to Allāh (*qurba*) and whoever denies it is judged to be a disbeliever (*kāfir*). Yet, the latter view is probably closer to being correct than the first, because to declare prohibited something the Ulema by Consensus declared desirable (*mustahabb*), is disbelief. For that is graver than to declare prohibited something agreed upon as merely permitted (*mubāḥ*).<sup>62</sup>

<sup>62</sup> Al-Qārī, *Sharḥ al-Shifā'* (2:514).

Imām al-Khafājī's  
Rejection of this *Fatwā*

Another Ḥanafī Imām who wrote a major commentary on 'Iyāḍ's *Shifā'*, al-Khafājī, said of Ibn Taymiyya in relation to his heretical *fatwā*: "He imagined that he was defending monotheism with all kinds of nonsense which do not deserve mention for they do not originate from the mind of a rational person, let alone an eminent one – Allāh forgive him!"<sup>63</sup>

Other Rejections of this *Fatwā*

Also rejecting Ibn Taymiyya's *fatwā* as invalid are Shaykh al-Islām 'Izz al-Dīn Ibn Jamā'a in the chapter on *ziyāra* in his massive *Hidāyat al-Sālik ilā al-Madhāhib al-Arba'a fil-Manāsik*;<sup>64</sup> Shaykh al-Islām Aḥmad Zaynī Daḥlān in his books; Shaykh Abū 'Abd Allāh ibn al-Nu'mān al-Maghribī al-Tilimsānī al-Mālikī in his *Miṣbāḥ al-Zalām fil-Mustaghithīna bi-Khayr al-Anām*; Nūr al-Dīn 'Alī ibn Burhān al-Dīn al-Ḥalabī al-Shāfi'ī – the author of the *Sīra Ḥalabiyya* – in his *Bughyat al-Aḥlām*, both of them

<sup>63</sup> In al-Nabhānī's *Shawāhid* (p. 185).

<sup>64</sup> In four volumes edited by Dr. Nūr al-Dīn 'Itr (Beirut: Dār al-Bashā'ir al-Islāmiyya, 1994) 4:1384.

included in al-Nabhānī's *Hujjat Allāh 'alā al-'Ālamīn*, among many other works on the topic of seeking an intermediary and asking the Prophet's ﷺ help (*al-tawassul wal-istighātha*); al-Nabhānī with his *Shawāhid al-Ḥaqq*; Imām al-Lacknawī's three Urdu treatises against Muḥammad Bashīr al-Sahsawānī who had advocated not visiting the Prophet ﷺ after pilgrimage; Shaykh Muḥammad ibn 'Alawī al-Mālikī in *Shifā' al-Fu'ād fī Ziyārati Khayr al-'Ibād*; Shaykh 'Isā al-Ḥimyarī of Dubai; Sayyid Yūsuf al-Rifā'ī of Kuwait; and others.

### Muḥammad Ibn 'Abd al-Hādī's Fanatic Defense of His Teacher

A Sufi but anti-Ash'arī student of Ibn Taymiyya and al-Dhahabī, Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Hādī violently attacked Shaykh al-Islām al-Subkī in a refutation entitled *al-Ṣārim al-Munkī fī Naḥr al-Subkī* ("The Hurtful Blade in the Throat of al-Subkī") in which he "adopted the manner of fanatics and departed from the norms of the scholars of ḥadīth,"<sup>65</sup> filling his book with unfounded accusations "in order to defend the innovations of his teacher [...]. It would have been better titled *al-Shātim al-Ifkī* ('The Mendacious Abuser')."<sup>66</sup> He falsely accuses al-Subkī of encouraging pilgrimage to the Prophet's ﷺ grave, prostration to it, circumambulating around it, and the belief that the Prophet ﷺ removes difficulty, grants ease, and causes whoever he wishes to enter into Paradise, all independently of Allāh ﷻ!

<sup>65</sup> 'Abd al-'Azīz al-Ghumārī, *al-Tahānī fīl-Ta' qīb 'alā Mawḍū'āt al-Ṣāghānī* (p. 49).

<sup>66</sup> Al-Nabhānī, *Shawāhid al-Ḥaqq* (p. 275-276).

Nu'mān al-Alūsī also wrote an attack on both al-Haytamī and al-Subkī titled *Jalā' al-'Aynayn* which he dedicated to the Indian Wahhābī Sufī, Şiddīq Ḥasan Khān al-Qinnawjī and in which, according to al-Nabhānī, he went even further than Ibn 'Abd al-Hādī.

Among the counter-refutations of these two works: Ibn 'Allān's *al-Mubrid al-Mubkī fī Radd al-Şārim al-Munkī*, al-Samannūdī's *Nuṣrat al-Imām al-Subkī bi-Radd al-Şārim al-Munkī*, a monograph by al-Akhnā'ī, and al-Nabhānī's *Shawāhid al-Ḥaqq*.<sup>67</sup> The latter cites the poems of two other critics of al-Subkī – the Ḥanbalī Abū al-Muẓaffar Yūsuf ibn Muḥammad ibn Mas'ūd al-'Ubadī al-'Uqaylī al-Saramrī and Muḥammad ibn Yūsuf al-Yumnī al-Yāfi'ī, “who claimed to follow the Shāfi'ī school” – then proceeds to refute them together with Ibn 'Abd al-Hādī's book.

Belief in the infallibility of Ibn Taymiyya typifies a good deal of his supporters such as those mentioned above. Shaykh 'Abd al-Fattāḥ Abū Ghudda said: “My teacher Shaykh Muḥammad Rāghib al-Ṭabbākh treated Ibn Taymiyya as if he were a Prophet!”<sup>68</sup> The Ḥanbalī jurist Abū Ḥafṣ al-Bazzār (688-749) went so far as to claim it impossible for anyone but an “ostentatious world-crazed liar” to find fault with Ibn Taymiyya!<sup>69</sup>

<sup>67</sup> Cf. al-Nabhānī, *Shawāhid al-Ḥaqq* (p. 241-247, 275-298).

<sup>68</sup> As related to the translator by Shaykh Mu'tazz al-Subaynī and others.

<sup>69</sup> In his *al-A'lām al-'Aliyya fī Manāqib Ibn Taymiyya* (p. 82). “Salafīs” confuse him – unwittingly or otherwise – with Ḥāfiẓ al-Bazzār, the author of the *Musnad*, who died four and a half centuries earlier.

## The Ḥadīth “Whoever Visits My Grave, My Intercession is Guaranteed for Him”

The ḥadīth “Whoever visits my grave, my intercession is guaranteed for him” (*Man zāra qabrī wajabat lahu shafā‘atī*)<sup>70</sup> is a fair

<sup>70</sup> Narrated from Ibn ‘Umar by al-Dāraqutnī (2:278 §194), al-Ṭayālīsī in his *Musnad* (2:12), al-Dūlābī in *al-Kunā wal-Asmā’* (2:64), al-Khaṭīb in *Talkhiṣ al-Mutashābih fil-Rasm* (1:581), Ibn al-Dubaythī in *al-Dhayl ‘alā al-Tārīkh* (2:170), Ibn Abī al-Dunyā in *Kitāb al-Qubūr*, al-Bayhaqī in *Shu‘ab al-Īmān* (3:490), al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī in *Nawādir al-Uṣūl* (p. 148), al-Haythamī (4:2), al-Subkī in *Shifā‘ al-Siqām* (p. 12-14), Abū al-Shaykh, Ibn ‘Adī in *al-Kāmil* (6:235, 6:351), al-‘Uqaylī in *al-Ḍu‘afā’* (4:170), al-Bazzār with a very weak chain containing ‘Abd Allāh ibn Ibrāhīm al-Ghifārī [cf. Ibn Ḥajar’s *Mukhtaṣar* (1:481 §822)] with the wording (1) “Whoever visits my grave, my intercession shall take place for him” (*hallaṭ lahu shafā‘atī*), and Ibn Ḥajar who indicated its grade of *ḥasan* in *Talkhiṣ al-Ḥabīr* (2:266) as it is strengthened by other ḥadīths which both he and al-Haythamī mention, such as: (2) “Whoever visits me without any avowed purpose other than my visit, it is incumbent upon me to be his intercessor on the Day of Resurrection.” Narrated by al-Ṭabarānī in *al-Awsaṭ* and *al-Kabīr* with a chain containing Maslama ibn Sālim and by Ibn al-Sakan in his *Sunan al-Ṣiḥāḥ* as stated by al-Shirbīnī in *Mughnī al-Muḥtāj* (1:512). (3) “Whoever makes pilgrimage then visits me after my death it is as if he visited me in my life.” Narrated by al-Ṭabarānī in *al-Kabīr* (12:406), al-Dāraqutnī (2:278), and al-Bayhaqī in *al-Sunan al-Kubrā* (5:246 §10054-10055) all through Ḥafṣ ibn Abī Dāwūd al-Qārī, whom only Aḥmad declared passable (*sāliḥ*). Mamdūḥ said (p. 337-340) it is more *da‘if* than other weak ḥadīths in this chapter. (4) “Whoever visits my grave after my death is as those who visited me in my life.” Narrated by al-Ṭabarānī in *al-Kabīr* (12:406) and *al-Awsaṭ* (1:94) with a chain containing ‘Ā’isha bint Yūnus whose status is uncertain, and from Ḥātib by al-Dāraqutnī (2:278) cf. al-Maqdisi, *Fadā’il al-A‘māl* (p. 108) with another chain which al-Dhahabī said was one of the best chains in that chapter. Mamdūḥ said (p. 330-334) it is *da‘if* but not *mawḍū‘*, contrary to the claims of Ibn Taymiyya and his imitators. (5) “Whoever makes pilgrimage and does not visit me, has been rude to me.” Narrated by al-Dāraqutnī in *Gharā’ib Malīk*. Al-Lacknawī said in his *Muwatta’* marginalia: “It is not forged as Ibn al-Jawzī and Ibn Taymiyya said, rather, a number of scholars considered its chain fair, and a number considered it weak.” Mamdūḥ (p. 344-346) considers it forged. Al-‘Uqaylī in *al-Ḍu‘afā’* (4:170) declared the chains of

(*ḥasan*) narration as concluded by Imām ‘Abd al-Ḥayy al-Lacknawī,<sup>71</sup> his editor ‘Abd al-Fattāḥ Abū Ghudda, and Maḥmūd Mamdūḥ,<sup>72</sup> although some early scholars had declared it sound (*ṣaḥīḥ*) such as Ibn al-Sakan in *al-Sunan al-Ṣiḥāḥ* and ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq al-Ishbīlī in *al-Aḥkām*, followed by Shaykh al-Islām al-Taḥī al-Subkī in *Shifā’ al-Siqām* in view of the totality of the chains.<sup>73</sup> Other ḥadīth scholars who considered it authentic are the ḥadīth Master Ḍiyā’ al-Dīn al-Maḥdisī in his *Faḍā’il al-A’ māl*,<sup>74</sup> Ibn Ḥajar and his student the ḥadīth Master al-Sakhāwī,<sup>75</sup> the ḥadīth Master of Madīna Imām al-Samhūdī,<sup>76</sup> Imām al-Haytamī in *al-Jawhar al-Munazzam fī Ziyārat al-Qabr al-Mukarram*, and Aḥmad al-Ghumārī in *Iḥyā’ al-Maqbūr min Adillati Jawāz Bina’ al-Masājid ‘alā al-Qubūr* (3rd ed. Cairo: Maktabat al-Qāhira, 2005). Al-Ghassānī (d. 682) did not include it in his documentation of al-Dāraquṭnī’s weak narrations entitled *Takhrīj al-Aḥādīth al-Ḍi’ āf min Sunan al-Dāraquṭnī*.<sup>77</sup>

Ibn ‘Umar’s narration “soft” (*layyina*) as did al-Dhahabī, the latter adding – as did al-Bayhaqī and al-Fattānī in *Tadhkirat al-Mawḍū’ āt* – that they strengthened each other as none contains any liar nor forger, as stated by al-Suyūṭī in *al-Durar al-Muntathira*, al-Munāwī in *Fayḍ al-Qadīr* (6:140), and al-‘Ajlūnī in *Kashf al-Khafā* (2:328-329). The narration (6) “Whoever visits me in al-Madīna anticipating reward (*muḥtasiban*), I shall be for him a witness and an intercessor on the Day of Resurrection,” narrated from Anas by al-Bayhaqī in *Shu’ab al-Imān* (3:489-490), al-Jurjānī in *Tārīkh Jurjān* (p. 220, 433), Ibn Abī al-Dunyā, Ibn ‘Asākīr, al-Janādī, and others, through Abū al-Muthannā Sulaymān ibn Yazīd al-Madanī al-Ka’bī who was declared weak by al-Dāraquṭnī, Abū Ḥātim, and Ibn Ḥibbān while al-Tirmidhī considered his narrations fair cf. Ibn Ḥajar, *Liṣān* (7:481) and *Tahdhīb* (12:242). It was declared fair by al-Suyūṭī in al-*Jāmi’ al-Ṣaḥīḥ* (8:716) and “fair or rather sound through its corroborators” by al-Ghumārī in *al-Mudāwī* (6:290) in confirmation of al-Subkī in *Shifā’ al-Siqām*.

<sup>71</sup> In *Zafar al-Amānī* (p. 422) and *al-Ajwibat al-Fāḍila* (p. 155).

<sup>72</sup> In his *Raf’ al-Mināra* (p. 280 and p. 318).

<sup>73</sup> As related by Ibn Ḥajar in *Talkhīṣ al-Ḥabīr* (2:267). Cf. al-Shawkānī in *Nayl al-Awṭār* (5:95) and al-Sindī in his notes on Ibn Mājah.

<sup>74</sup> Ḍiyā’ al-Dīn al-Maḥdisī, *Faḍā’il al-A’ māl* (p. 108).

<sup>75</sup> In Ibn Ḥajar’s *Talkhīṣ* and *Ṭuruq Ḥadīth al-Ziyāra* and al-Sakhāwī’s *al-Qawl al-Badī’* (p. 160).

<sup>76</sup> In al-Samannūdī’s *Sa’ ādat al-Darayn* (1:77) and al-Samhūdī’s *Wafā al-Wafā*.



Some late scholars, beginning with Ibn Taymiyya, remained undecided whether to grade this ḥadīth weak or forged.

Imām al-Lacknawī said about this ḥadīth:

There are some who declared it weak [e.g. al-Bayhaqī, Ibn Khuzayma, and al-Suyūṭī], and others who asserted that all the ḥadīths on visitation of the Prophet ﷺ are forged, such as Ibn Taymiyya and his followers, but both positions are false for those who were given right understanding, for verification of the case dictates that the ḥadīth is *ḥasan*, as Taqī al-Dīn al-Subkī has expounded in his book *Shifā' al-Siqām*.<sup>78</sup>

Among those who fall into the category of "Ibn Taymiyya and his followers" on this issue:

- Ibn ‘Abd al-Hādī who wrote *al-Ṣārim al-Munkī* in rude refutation of al-Subkī's book on visitation, but contradicted his own position in another book of his: he makes much ado about the reliability of ‘Abd Allāh ibn ‘Umar al-‘Umarī in *al-Ṣārim al-Munkī*, but relies upon him in another book, *al-Tanqīh!*<sup>79</sup> Shaykh Maḥmūd Mamdūh refuted his weakening of this ḥadīth in great detail<sup>80</sup> and stated that *al-Ṣārim al-Munkī* is at the root of all subsequent generalizations in weakening the ḥadīths that concern the desirability of visitation.<sup>81</sup>
- The nawāb of Bhopal and Indian Sufi Wahhābī, Ṣiddīq Ḥasan Khān al-Qinnawjī in his travelogue entitled *Riḥlat al-Ṣiddīq ilā al-Bayt al-‘Atīq* as critiqued by al-Lacknawī.<sup>82</sup>

<sup>77</sup> Published at Riyadh: Dār ‘Ālam al-Kutub, 1991.

<sup>78</sup> Al-Lacknawī, *Zaḡfar al-Amānī* (p. 422).

<sup>79</sup> Ibn ‘Abd al-Hādī, *al-Tanqīh!* (1:122) as per Mamdūh in *Raf‘ al-Mināra* (p. 12).

<sup>80</sup> In *Raf‘ al-Mināra* (p. 280-318).

<sup>81</sup> In *Raf‘ al-Mināra* (p. 9).

<sup>82</sup> Al-Lacknawī, *Zaḡfar al-Amānī* (p. 422 n.1), cf. his catalogue of al-Qinnawjī's mistakes entitled *Ibrāz al-Ghayy* which we mention further down in this book (p. 302).

- The late Wahhābī “Desert Storm” muftī, ‘Abd al-‘Azīz ibn Bāz, who imitated Ibn Taymiyya’s imprudent verdict: “The ḥadīths that concern the visitation of the grave of the Prophet ﷺ are all weak, indeed forged”;<sup>83</sup>
- The late Nāṣir al-Albānī<sup>84</sup> who claimed that the visit to the Prophet ﷺ ranks among the innovations<sup>85</sup> although he himself is the rank arch-innovator of our time.
- Nāṣir al-Jadya‘, who in 1993 obtained his Ph.D. with First Honors from the University of Muḥammad ibn Sa‘ūd after writing a 600-page book entitled *al-Tabarruk* in which he perpetuates the same aberrant claim.

(All these books are available in print but *Shifā’ al-Siqām!*)

Imām al-Sakhāwī said:

The emphasis and encouragement on visiting his noble grave is mentioned in numerous ḥadīths, and it would suffice to show this if there was only the ḥadīth whereby the truthful and God-confirmed Prophet ﷺ promises that his intercession, among other things, becomes guaranteed for whoever visits him, and the Imāms are in complete agreement from the time directly after his passing until our own time that this [*i.e.* visiting him] is among the best acts of drawing near to Allāh ﷻ.<sup>86</sup>

<sup>83</sup> In his annotations on Ibn Ḥajar’s *Fath al-Bārī* (1989 ed. 3:387), echoing the exact words used by Ibn Taymiyya in his *Minhāj al-Sunna al-Nabawiyya* (1986 ed. 2:441) and *Majmū‘ al-Fatāwā* (27:119).

<sup>84</sup> In his *Irwā’ al-Ghalīl* (4:337-338) in which he imitated Ibn ‘Abd al-Hādī’s claims.

<sup>85</sup> In *Talkhīṣ Aḥkām al-Janā’iz* (p. 110) and elsewhere in his writings.

<sup>86</sup> Al-Sakhāwī, *al-Qawl al-Badī‘* (p. 160). In *al-Maqāṣid al-Ḥasana* (p. 413) he adopts al-Dhahabī’s opinion that “the chains of the ḥadīth of visitation are all ‘soft’ (*layyina*) but strengthen each other because none of them contains any liar.”

There is no contest among the jurists of the Four Schools as to the probative force of the narration of Ibn 'Umar, as they adduce it time and again to illustrate the strong desirability of visiting the Prophet ﷺ in Madīna. See, for example, among Ḥanbali sources alone, the textbooks already cited. See also the additional sound texts illustrating visits to the Prophet ﷺ, among them that of the Companion Bilāl ibn Rabāḥ al-Ḥabashī ؓ all the way from Damascus with the expressed intention of visiting the Prophet ﷺ to greet him and, upon arrival, his rubbing his face against the Prophetic grave in tears before proceeding to raise the *adhān* upon the request of the two grandsons of the Prophet ﷺ,<sup>87</sup> as well as the Companions' practice of seeking the Prophet ﷺ as an intermediary for their needs by visiting his grave, such as Bilāl ibn al-Ḥārith al-Muzanī, Abū Ayyūb al-Anṣārī, 'Ā'isha, and Fāṭima ؓ, all as cited in the sections on *Tawassul* and Visitation in the *Encyclopedia of Islamic Doctrine*.

<sup>87</sup> Narrated by Ibn 'Asākir (7:137) with a good chain (*sanad jayyid*) as stated by al-Shawkānī in *Nayl al-Awṭār* (5:180), at the conclusion of *Kitāb al-Manāsik*.

## His Last Days and Repentance from His Activities

In the final five months of his last two-year period in jail, Ibn Taymiyya was prevented from writing, at which time he turned to prayer and the intensive recitation of the Qur'ān and repented from having spent time writing doctrinal refutations instead of focusing on the commentary of the Qur'ān.<sup>88</sup> He confided to his faithful student Ibn al-Qayyim: "My Paradise and my Garden are in my breast – meaning his faith and knowledge – and wherever I go they never depart from me. My prison is seclusion, my execution is martyrdom, and my exile is an excursion."<sup>89</sup>

Al-Ṣafadī said: "He wasted his time refuting the Christians and the Rāfiḍa, or whoever objected to the Religion or contradicted it, but if he had devoted himself to explaining al-Bukhārī or the Noble Qur'ān, he would have placed the garland of his well-ordered speech on the necks of the people of knowledge."<sup>90</sup>

Al-Nabhānī said: "He refuted the Christians, the Shī'īs, the logicians, then the Ash'arīs and *Ahl al-Sunna*, in short, sparing no one whether Muslim or non-Muslim, Sunni or otherwise."<sup>91</sup>

Al-Dhahabī said: "Our Shaykh Ibn Taymiyya, in his last days, used to say, 'I do not declare anyone of the *Umma* a disbeliever

<sup>88</sup> As related from al-Dhahabī by Ibn Rajab in *Dhayl Ṭabaqāt al-Ḥanābila* (2:401-402).

<sup>89</sup> In Ibn al-Qayyim, *al-Wābil al-Ṣayyib min al-Kalim al-Tayyib* (p. 69).

<sup>90</sup> Al-Ṣafadī, *al-Wāfi bil-Wafayāt* (7:19-22).

<sup>91</sup> Al-Nabhānī, *Shawāhid al-Ḥaqq*.

(*kāfir*), and he said, "The Prophet ﷺ said, "No one always keeps his ablution except a believer."<sup>92</sup> Therefore, whoever regularly performs the prayers with ablution, he is a Muslim."<sup>93</sup>

### His Abandonment by His Former Admirers

His student al-Dhahabī praised him lavishly as "the brilliant Shaykh, Imām, erudite Scholar, censor, jurist, *mujtahid*, and commentator of the Qur'an," but acknowledged that Ibn Taymiyya's disparaging manners alienated even his admirers. For example, the grammarian Abū Ḥayyān al-Andalusī – whom al-Dhahabī considered the most knowledgeable Master of his time in the Arabic language<sup>94</sup> – praised Ibn Taymiyya until he found out that the latter believed himself a greater expert in the Arabic language than Sībawayh, whereupon he retracted his previous praise and dissociated himself from him. In his *Tafsīr* he mentioned the anthropomorphist beliefs of Ibn Taymiyya. Ḥajjī Khalifa said: "Ibn Taymiyya authored a book entitled *al-'Arsh* in which he stated that Allāh sits on the *kursī* and leaves some space vacant for the Prophet ﷺ to sit next to him. Abū Ḥayyān al-Andalusī mentioned it in [his Qur'ānic commentary titled] *al-Nahr* and said he read it in Ibn Taymiyya's own handwriting."<sup>95</sup> Shaykh al-Islām Taqī al-Dīn al-Subkī at first reportedly

<sup>92</sup> Narrated from Thawbān by Ibn Mājah, Aḥmad, and al-Dārimī.

<sup>93</sup> In al-Dhahabī, *Siyar* (Risāla ed. 15:88 in the notice on Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ash'arī).

<sup>94</sup> Cf. *Siyar* (7:189).

<sup>95</sup> See below, note 200.

praised him in a letter to al-Dhahabī<sup>96</sup> but later accused him of disbelief in the same manner as the ḥadīth Master al-‘Alā’ī.

Other former admirers turned critics were the Qādī al-Zamalkānī, Jalāl al-Dīn al-Qazwīnī, al-Qūnawī, al-Jarīrī, and al-Dhahabī himself. The latter, in his *Naṣīḥa*, addresses Ibn Taymiyya with the words: “When will you stop criticizing the scholars and finding fault with people?” Al-Zamalkānī moved from praising Ibn Taymiyya as “the greatest memorizer of the last five hundred years” to becoming his chief prosecutor in Damascus and authoring two refutations against him: one on divorce and another one on the visitation of the Prophet ﷺ.<sup>97</sup>

<sup>96</sup> Reproduced by Ibn Rajab in *Dhayl Ṭabaqāt al-Ḥanābila* (2:392) and Ibn Ḥajar in *al-Durar al-Kāmina* (1:159) cf. Abū Ghudda, *al-‘Ulamā’ al-‘Uzzāb* (p. 175). In light of al-Subkī’s published positions on Ibn Taymiyya the authenticity of this letter is dubious.

<sup>97</sup> *Bidāya* (14:131-132), *Durar* (4:193), *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfi‘iyya al-Kubrā* (9:191), *Dhayl Ṭabaqāt al-Ḥanābila* (2:392-393).

## His Revival of Ibn Ḥazm's Vicious Style

The Ulema saw the influence of Ibn Ḥazm in Ibn Taymiyya's poisoned quill. Al-Ṣafadī said: "He adorned himself with [Ibn Ḥazm's] *Muḥallā*, imitating whatever he wished from it – if he wished, he could cite it from memory – and adducing from it a number of attacks and disparagements."<sup>98</sup>

Al-Dhahabī said: "I do not consider him sinless, and I even disagree with him on a number of questions in both the foundations and the branches, for, despite his vast knowledge, great courage, abundant wit, and staunch defense of what Allāh had prohibited, he was nevertheless a human being among other human beings, hot-tempered in his manner of debate, given to anger and outbursts against his opponents. This would sow enmity toward him in people's hearts. If he had shown kindness towards his opponents he would have been the pivot of Consensus."<sup>99</sup>

<sup>98</sup> Al-Ṣafadī, *al-Wāfi bil-Wafayāt* (7:19-22).

<sup>99</sup> Al-Dhahabī as cited by Ibn Ḥajar in *al-Durar al-Kāmina* (1:176-178).

His Excessive Involvement  
in *Kalām* and Philosophy

Dr. Sa'īd al-Būṭī pointed out that although Ibn Taymiyya blamed al-Ghazzālī and other Ash'arī Scholars for involving themselves in philosophical or dialectical disputations, he himself went much further than most into *kalām* and philosophy. This is shown by Ibn Taymiyya's books in *kalām* and philosophy such as *Muwāfaqāt al-Manqūl wal-Ma'qūl*, *al-Ta'sīs Radd al-Asās*, and most notably by his positions in *al-Radd 'alā al-Manṭiqiyyīn* ("Against the Logicians") on the "generic beginninglessness" of created matters and Aristotelian causality (*al-'illa al-arīṣṭiyya*).<sup>100</sup>

Al-Dhahabī alluded to this in his epistle to Ibn Taymiyya: "When will you stop investigating the poisoned minutiae of philosophical disbelief, so that we have to refute them with our minds? You have swallowed the poisons of the philosophers and their treatises, not once, but several times!"<sup>101</sup>

<sup>100</sup> Cf. al-Būṭī, *al-Salafiyya* (p. 164-175) and al-Ikḥmīmī's (700-764) refutation of Ibn Taymiyya published as *Risāla fil Radd 'alā Ibn Taymiyya* cf. below (p. 74-75, 103-104). See also our edition of Ibn Khafif's *Aqīda* §41 ("Things do not act of their own nature...") and its note.

<sup>101</sup> Al-Dhahabī, *al-Naṣīḥa al-Dhahabiyya*, in the margin of his *Bayān Zaghl al-'Ilm wal-Ṭalab*, ed. al-Kawtharī (Damascus: Qudsi, 1928-1929) and in *Shaykh al-Islām Ibn Taymiyya: Sīratuhu wa-Akhbāruhu 'ind al-Mu'arrikhīn*, ed. Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Munajjid (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-'Arabī, 1976) p. 11-14.



Al-Dhahabī's *Bayān Zaghl al-'Ilm*  
and His *Naṣīḥa* to Ibn Taymiyya

Al-Dhahabī's *Bayān Zaghl al-'Ilm wal-Ṭalab* is a brief epistle in which he lists the different disciplines and sciences of Islām and then proceeds to describe them, as well as the Four Sunnī Schools. In his chapter on doctrine, he mentions his teacher: "Ibn Taymiyya was considered by his enemies to be a wicked Anti-Christ and disbeliever, while great numbers of the wise and the elite considered him an eminent, brilliant, and scholarly innovator (*mubtadi' fāḍil muḥaqqiq bāri'*)."<sup>102</sup> It recently received a meticulous edition at the hands of Muḥammad Nāṣir al-'Ajmī.

*Al-Naṣīḥat al-Dhahabiyya li-Ibni Taymiyya* is an epistle written when al-Dhahabī was around fifty-five years of age and addressed to Ibn Taymiyya near the end of his life. In this brief but scathing epistle, the author distances himself from his contemporary and admonishes him without naming him, calling him "an eloquent polemicist who neither rests nor sleeps."<sup>103</sup>

The *Naṣīḥa* contains the following prediction of Taymiyya-followers in our time:

<sup>102</sup> Al-Dhahabī, *Bayān Zaghl al-'Ilm* (p. 23-24). Also cited in al-Sakhāwī's *I'lān* (p. 78).

<sup>103</sup> See note 101.

Oh! The disappointment of him who follows you! For he is exposed to corruption in basic beliefs and to dissolution, particularly if he is short of learning and religion, a self-indulgent idler who does well for you by fighting on your behalf with his hand and tongue, while he is actually your enemy in his being and heart. What are your followers but dogmatic do-nothings of little intelligence, common liars with dull minds, silent outlanders strong in guile, or dryly righteous without understanding? If you do not believe it, just look at them and honestly assess them!<sup>104</sup>

A "Salafi" apologist recently cast doubt on the authenticity of al-Dhahabī's authorship of this epistle, also claiming that, even if al-Dhahabī wrote it, then it is directed to someone other than Ibn Taymiyya!<sup>105</sup>

However, al-Sakhāwī does not doubt the authenticity of its attribution to al-Dhahabī and calls it "a glorious statement of doctrine."<sup>106</sup> And the two major experts on al-Dhahabī's works, Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Munajjid and Bashshār 'Awwād Ma'rūf, declared there was no doubt al-Dhahabī wrote it in his mature years and addressed it to Ibn Taymiyya.<sup>107</sup> Among the proofs of its authenticity is that the ḥadīth Master Abū Sa'īd al-'Alā'ī said he copied it himself from al-Dhahabī's autograph manuscript.

<sup>104</sup> See [www.masud.co.uk](http://www.masud.co.uk) for a full translation of the *Naṣiḥa*.

<sup>105</sup> Muḥammad al-Shaybānī, *al-Tawḍīḥ al-Jalī fīl-Radd 'alā al-Naṣiḥat al-Dhahabiyya al-Manḥūla 'alā al-Imām al-Dhahabī* (Kuwait: Markaz al-Makhtūṭāt wal-Turāth, 1993). This type of revisionist scholarship is reminiscent of the story-teller who was caught by Imām Aḥmad and Yaḥyā ibn Ma'in falsely claiming: "Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal and Yaḥyā ibn Ma'in narrated to us..." whereupon the unfazed fibber replied: "I meant another Aḥmad and another Yaḥyā, not you two!"

<sup>106</sup> Al-Sakhāwī, *al-I'lān wal-Tawbīkh* (p. 77=p. 136).

<sup>107</sup> Cf. Bashshār 'Awwād Ma'rūf, *al-Dhahabī wa-Manḥajuhu* (p. 146). Two extant manuscripts of the *Naṣiḥa* are kept, one in Cairo at the Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣriyya (\$B18823) copied by Ibn Qāḍī Shuhba and one in Damascus at the Zāhiriyya library (\$1347).

The *Mufassir* Qāḍī Burhān al-Dīn Ibn Jamā'a, Abū Ishāq Ibrāhīm ibn 'Abd al-Raḥīm ibn Muḥammad al-Miṣrī *thumma* al-Maqdisī al-Dimashqī (725-790) then copied it himself from al-'Alā'īs autograph manuscript, then Taqī al-Dīn Abū Bakr ibn Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad Ibn Qāḍī Shuhba (d. 779) copied it himself from the autograph manuscript of Ibn Jamā'a. Al-Kawtharī published its facsimile edition as written by Ibn Qāḍī Shuhba.

Al-Subkī's Summary of  
Ibn Taymiyya's Deviations in Doctrine

Shaykh al-Islām Taqī al-Dīn al-Subkī (d. 756) refuted him in his *al-Durrat al-Muḍiyya*, *al-Sayf al-Ṣaqīl*, and *al-Rasā'il al-Subkiyya fil-Radd 'alā Ibn Taymiyya*. In the *Durra* and the introduction to the first epistle of the *Rasā'il* he wrote:

When Ibn Taymiyya innovated whatever he innovated in the principles of doctrines and destroyed the pillars and seams of the foundations of Islām after camouflaging himself with the pretense of following the Book and the Sunna, pretending to summon people to the truth and guide them to Paradise, he left conformity (*ittibā'*) and entered novelty (*ibtidā'*), strayed (*shadhdha*) from the Congregation (*jamā'a*) of the Muslims by violating the Consensus (*al-ijmā'*), and attributed to the Transcendent Essence what presupposes corporeality and compound nature (*mā yaqtaḍī al-jismiyya wal-tarkīb*).

He claimed that dependency on composite parts is not an impossibility; that created entities (*al-ḥawādīth*) subsist in the Essence of Allāh ﷻ; that the Qur'ān is originated, Allāh speaking it after its nonexistence; that He speaks, falls silent, and originates in His Essence the volitions (*al-irādāt*) according to created things, in the process arriving at the necessary pre-eternity of the world (*istilzām qidam al-'ālam*) by stating

that there is no beginning for created entities. So he claimed the existence of "originated entities without beginning" (*ḥawādith lā awwala lahā*),<sup>108</sup> and that the attribute of pre-eternity was created, and that the created was without beginning. None ever held these two doctrines at one and the same time in any society nor in any religious community, so he is not part of any of the seventy-three sects<sup>109</sup> into which the *Umma* split, nor can there be any ground for him to stand with any particular *umma*. And even if all this constitutes the foulest disbelief (*kufran shanī'an*), yet it is little compared to what he innovated in the branches!<sup>110</sup>

#### Al-Haytamī's Summary of Ibn Taymiyya's Deviations

Another Shāfi'ī jurist, al-Haytamī, wrote:

Ibn Taymiyya is a servant whom Allāh forsook, misguided, blinded, deafened, and debased. That is the declaration of the Imāms who have exposed the corruption of his positions and the mendacity of his sayings. Whoever wishes to pursue this must read the words of the *mujtahid* Imām Abū al-Ḥasan al-

<sup>108</sup> Cf. below (n. 112).

<sup>109</sup> Ḥadith of the Prophet ﷺ: "My Community shall divide into seventy-three sects, all of them in the Fire except one: the Congregation." Narrated from Abū Hurayra by Ibn Mājah and, as part of a longer ḥadīth, from Mu'āwiya by Abū Dāwūd and Aḥmad, all with good chains as stated by al-'Irāqī in *al-Mughnī* while al-Ḥākim (1:128=1990 ed. 1:218) said "a sound chain," and in part from Anas by Abū Ya'lā in his *Musnad* (7:32-36 §3938 and §3944 *isnād ḍa'if*).

<sup>110</sup> Al-Subkī, *al-Durrat al-Muḍiyya fil-Radd 'alā Ibn Taymiyya* (1<sup>st</sup> epistle, *Naqd al-Ijtīmā'* p. 6-7).

Subkī, of his son Tāj al-Dīn Ibn al-Subkī, of the Imām al-‘Izz ibn Jamā‘a and others of the Shāfi‘ī, Mālikī, and Ḥanafī shaykhs [...] He must be exposed as a misguided and misguiding innovator (*mubtadi’ dāll muḍill*) and a fanatically ignorant person (*jāhilun ghālin*) whom Allāh treated with His justice. May He protect us from the likes of his path, doctrine, and actions! [...] Know that he has differed from people on questions about which Tāj al-Dīn Ibn al-Subkī and others warned us. Among the things Ibn Taymiyya said which violate the scholarly Consensus are:

- that whosoever violates the Consensus commits neither disbelief (*kufr*) nor grave transgression (*fisq*);<sup>111</sup>
- that our Lord is subject to created events (*maḥallun lil-ḥawādith*) – glorified, exalted, and sanctified is He far beyond what the depraved ascribe to Him!
- that He is compound or made of parts (*murakkab*), His Essence standing in need of something as the whole stands in need of its parts, elevated is He and sanctified beyond that!
- that the Qur’ān is created in the Essence of Allāh (*muḥdath fī dhātillāh*), elevated is He beyond that!
- that the world is of a pre-eternal nature and exists with Allāh since pre-eternity as an “ever-abiding created object” (*makh-lūqan dā’iman*), thus making it necessarily existent in His Essence (*mūjaban bil-dhāt*) and [representing Him as] not acting deliberately (*la fā‘ilan bil-ikhtiyār*), elevated is He beyond that!<sup>112</sup> [Ibn Taymiyya was refuted by his contemporary

<sup>111</sup> A necessary corollary of Ibn Taymiyya’s claim that the triple formulation of divorce counts as one in unambiguous violation of the Consensus on the matter.

<sup>112</sup> *Fath al-Bārī* (1959 ed. 13:411). Whoever holds this doctrine is considered a *kāfir* by

Imām al-Ikḥmīmī al-Miṣrī (700-764) in his *Risāla fīl-Radd ‘alā Ibn Taymiyya fī Mas’alati Ḥawādith lā Awwala Lahā* (“Treatise in Refutation of Ibn Taymiyya on the Question of Created Matters that Have No Beginning”), by al-Ṣan‘ānī in his *Risāla Sharīfa fī-Mā Yata‘ allāqu bi-kam al-Bāqī min ‘Umr al-Dunyā?* (“A Precious Treatise Concerning the Remaining Age of the World”),<sup>113</sup> and by Ibn Ḥajar in one line in *Fath al-Bārī*.<sup>114</sup>]

- suggestions of the corporeality, direction, and displacement [of Allāh ﷻ] (*al-jismiyya wal-jiha wal-intiqāl*),<sup>115</sup> and that He fits the size of the Throne, being neither bigger nor smaller, exalted is He from such a hideous invention and wide-open disbelief, and may He forsake all his followers, and may all his beliefs be scattered and lost!
- that the Fire shall go out (*al-nār tafnī*);<sup>116</sup>
- that Prophets are not sinless (*al-anbiyā’ ghayr ma‘ṣūmīn*);
- that the Prophet ﷺ has no special status before Allāh (*lā jāha lahu*) and must not be used as an intermediary (*lā yutawassalu bihi*);
- that the undertaking of travel (*al-safar*) to the Prophet ﷺ in order to visit him is a sin, for which it is unlawful to shorten

Imām Abū Ishāq al-Isfarāyīnī who said: “If, together with belief, one holds a view such as that the world is without beginning, or other such position which contradicts belief, then belief is altogether annulled in that person.” In Ibn al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfi‘iyya al-Kubrā* (4:256-262 §358).

<sup>113</sup> Ed. al-Waṣabī al-Mathānī. (Ṣan‘ā’: Maktabat Dār al-Quds, 1992).

<sup>114</sup> Ibn Ḥajar, *Fath* (17:81).

<sup>115</sup> This doctrine was refuted by Ibn Jahbal al-Kilābī and Qāḍī Yūsuf al-Nabhānī among many others as already discussed.

<sup>116</sup> As reported from him by Ibn al-Qayyim – who tends to agree with him – in his *Hādī al-Arwāḥ* (p. 252-258 and following).

the prayers, and that it is forbidden to ask for his intercession in view of the Day of Need;<sup>117</sup>

– and that the words (*alfāz*) of the Torah and the Gospel were not substituted, but only their meanings (*ma‘ānī*) were.<sup>118</sup>

Some said: “Whoever looks at his books does not attribute to him most of these positions, except his view that Allāh ﷻ has a direction, and that he authored a book to establish this, which, by extension, proves that the people who follow this school of thought are believers in Divine corporeality (*jismiyya*), dimensionality (*muḥādhāt*), and settledness (*istiqrār*).” That is, it may be that, at times, he used to assert these proofs and they were consequently attributed to him in particular. But whoever attributed this to him from among the Imāms of Islām on whose greatness, leadership, religion, trustworthiness, fairness, acceptance, insight, and meticulousness there is agreement – then they do not say anything except what has been duly established with added precautions and repeated inquiry. This is especially true when a view is attributed to a Muslim which necessitates his disbe-

<sup>117</sup> See the discussion of the narration “Whoever visits my grave” (p. 59-63) previously.

<sup>118</sup> As for the claim that the same view was reported from Ibn ‘Abbās by al-Bukhārī in his *Ṣaḥīḥ* (in the fourth to last chapter-title of *Kitāb al-Tawḥīd*): this is inauthentic from Ibn ‘Abbās as indicated by Ibn Ḥajar – in *Taḥlīq al-Ta‘līq* – who attributes it to Wahb ibn Munabbih, a frequent narrator of Israelite reports, as does Ibn Kathīr in his *Tafsīr* in commentary of the verse {*of such as say with their mouths: “We believe,” but their hearts believe not, and of the Jews: listeners for the sake of falsehood, listeners on behalf of other folk who come not unto you, changing words from their context and saying: If this be given unto you, receive it but if this be not given unto you, then beware!*} (5:41). Ibn Kathīr goes on to say: “If Wahb meant the books that are in their hands, then there is no doubt at all that substitution (*tabdīl*), tampering (*tahrīf*), addition (*ziyāda*), and omission (*naqṣ*) have entered into them.” And how could it possibly be authentic when Allāh ﷻ mentioned the name of the Prophet ﷺ in the Scriptures of *Ahl al-Kitāb* as “Aḥmad” but such a name is not found in them now? In *Fath al-Bārī*, Ibn Ḥajar goes on to say he found the reasoning of Ibn Taymiyya on this issue “astounding” (‘*ajīb*).



lief, apostasy, misguidance, and execution. Therefore, if it is true of him that he is a disbeliever and an innovator, then Allāh will deal with him with His justice, and other than that, He will forgive us and him.<sup>119</sup>

The "Salafī" Nu'mān al-Alūsī responded to the above condemnations and took the side of Ibn Taymiyya in his *Jalā' al-'Aynayn bi-Muḥākamat al-Aḥmadayn* ("The Arbitration Between the Two Aḥmads"), which Shaykh Yūsuf al-Nabhānī refuted in turn in his *Shawāhid al-Ḥaqq fil-Istighātha bi Sayyid al-Khalq* (ﷺ) ("The Witnesses to Truth Concerning the Obtainment of Aid through the Master of Creatures").

### Ibn Taymiyya's Incredulity of Imām Aḥmad's *Fatwā on Tabarruk* with the Prophetic Grave

Imām Badr al-Dīn al-'Aynī said in his monumental commentary on *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*: "Our Shaykh Zayn al-Dīn said the ḥadīth master Abū Sa'īd ibn al-'Alā'ī said, 'I saw in an old volume on the sayings of Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal countersigned by Ibn Nāṣir [al-Dīn] and other ḥadīth masters that Imām Aḥmad was asked about the kissing of the grave of the Prophet ﷺ and his pulpit, and he replied, "There is nothing wrong with that." We showed it to Shaykh Taqī al-Dīn Ibn Taymiyya. He was astonished at this and began saying, "I wonder! I consider Aḥmad too great! He said this? These are his words??" or something to that effect."<sup>120</sup>

<sup>119</sup> Al-Haytamī, *Fatāwā Ḥadīthiyya* (p. 114-117).

<sup>120</sup> Al-'Aynī, *Umdat al-Qārī* (9:241). This *fatwā* of Imām Aḥmad is firmly established as documented in our *Four Imāms and Their Schools* and *Albānī and His Friends*.

## His Denial of *Tawassul* and His Denial of Such Denial

Among the grave charges brought against Ibn Taymiyya was his denial of the lawfulness and validity of *tawassul* or seeking an intermediary through the Prophet ﷺ after his lifetime as he forwarded in *al-Tawassul wal-Wasīla* and his *Fatāwā*, and as quoted above from Ibn Ṭūlūn citing al-‘Alā’ī and Ibn Ḥajar citing al-Ṭūfī, among others. This unprecedented denial is explicitly contradicted by the Scholars before and after him, beginning with Imām Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal<sup>121</sup> and including Ibn Taymiyya’s own defenders, Ibn al-Qayyim (cf. *Nūniyya*, section on *tawassul*) and al-Dhahabī as well as al-Shawkānī and countless others.<sup>122</sup> Yet Ibn Rajab relates a contradictory position of Ibn Taymiyya in which all he denied was “asking help (*istighātha*) in the sense of worship (*bi-ma‘nā al-‘ibāda*), however, one may make *tawassul* through him”!<sup>123</sup>

<sup>121</sup> See his chapter in our *Four Imāms and Their Schools*.

<sup>122</sup> Cf. the comprehensive volume on *tawassul* in the *Encyclopedia of Islamic Doctrine*, Shaykh Ḥasan Qaribullāh’s monograph *al-Tawassul*, Muḥammad ‘Ābid al-Sindī’s treatise on *tawassul*, and the summation by our teacher Dr. Sāmīr al-Naṣṣ, *al-Wasīla ilā Fahmi Haqīqat al-Tawassul*.

<sup>123</sup> Ibn Rajab, *Dhayl Ṭabaqāt al-Ḥanābila* (2:398).

His Invention of a Post-Conversion  
Reconversion of al-Ash‘arī

It is mass-transmitted that Imām Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ash‘arī converted from Mu‘tazilism at age forty and spent the following quarter century refuting non-Sunni sects, including the free-thinkers, the Mu‘tazila, the anthropomorphists, the Rāfiḍīs, and others.<sup>124</sup> Under Ibn Taymiyya’s pen, however, this conversion subdivides into two doctrinal phases, the first only a semi-Sunni phase under Ibn Kullāb’s influence, and the latter a full-fledged Sunni phase in which he was supposedly taught by the Ḥanbalīs of Baghdād. No one preceded him in such a claim and he gave no proof of it other than his own words.<sup>125</sup> (Furthermore, according to Ibn Ḥajar, al-Bukhārī and Muslim followed Ibn Kullāb in doctrine. Certain Ḥanbalīs questioned *their* Sunnism as well.)<sup>126</sup>

<sup>124</sup> See note 430 below.

<sup>125</sup> Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmū‘ al-Fatāwā* (3:228). Subsequent Ḥanbalīs imitated him in this such as Ibn ‘Imād in *Shadharāt al-Dhahab* and al-Mu‘allimī in *al-Tankīl*.

<sup>126</sup> Ibn Ḥajar, *Fath al-Bārī* (1:243)

Al-Kawtharī's Scathing Exposure  
of His Anthropomorphism

The Renewer of Islām in the previous century, Imām Muḥammad Zāhid al-Kawtharī, stated in strong terms that Ibn Taymiyya's position on the Divine Attributes is tantamount to disbelief and apostasy because it reduces Allāh to a corporeal body. He states in his *Maqālāt*:

In *al-Ta'sīs fī Radd Asās al-Taqdīs* ("The Laying of the Foundation: A Refutation of al-Rāzī's "The Foundation of Divine Sanctification"), Ibn Taymiyya says: "*Al-'arsh* (the Throne) lexically means *al-sarīr* (elevated seat or couch), so named with respect to what is on top of it, just as the roof is so named with respect to what is under it. Therefore, if the Qur'ān attributes a throne to Allāh, it is known that this throne is, with respect to Allāh, like the elevated seat is with respect to other than Allāh. This makes it necessarily true that He is on top of the Throne." So then the Throne is, for Ibn Taymiyya, the seat (*maq'ad*) of Allāh ﷻ – Exalted is He far beyond such a notion!

He also says: "It is well-known that the Book, the Sunna, and the Consensus nowhere say that all bodies (*ajsām*) are created, and nowhere say that Allāh Himself is not a body. Nor did any of the Imāms of the Muslims ever say such a

thing.<sup>127</sup> Therefore if I also choose not to say it, it does not expel me from *fiṭra* nor from *Shari'at*.<sup>128</sup> These words are complete impudence. What did he do with all the verses declaring Allāh ﷻ to be far removed from anything like unto Him? Does he expect that the idiocy that every single idiot can come up with be addressed with a specific text? Is it not enough that Allāh ﷻ said: {*There is nothing whatsoever like Him*} (42:11)? Or does he consider it permissible for someone to say: Allāh ﷻ eats this, chews that, and tastes this, just because no text mentions the opposite? This is disbelief laid bare and pure anthropomorphism.

In another passage of the same book he says: "You [Ash'arīs] say He is neither a body nor an atom (*jawhar*) nor spatially bounded (*mutahayyiz*), and that He has no direction, and that He cannot be pointed to as an object of sensory perception, and that nothing of Him can be considered distinct from Him. You have asserted this on the grounds that Allāh is neither divisible nor made of parts, and that He has neither limit (*ḥadd*) nor end (*ghāya*), with your view thereby to forbid one to say that He has any limit or measure (*qadr*), or even that He has a dimension that is unlimited. But how do you allow yourselves to do this without evidence from the Book and the Sunna?"<sup>129</sup> The reader's intelligence suffices to

<sup>127</sup> Al-Ash'arī in *Maqālāt al-Islāmiyyīn* (p. 211) says precisely the contrary: "Ahl al-Sunna and the people of ḥadīth said that Allāh ﷻ is not a body." Similarly al-Kalābādī in *al-Ta'arruf* (p. 34-35). Ibn Taymiyya knows this cf. his *Minhāj* (2:326): "Al-Ash'arī and his early disciples said [...] He is not a body."

<sup>128</sup> Ibn Taymiyya, *al-Taṣīs Radd Asās al-Taqdīs = Bayān Talbīs al-Jahmiyya* (1:118) cf. *Minhāj* (2:205). He also claims in the latter (2:220) that the first to say that Allāh ﷻ is not a body were the Jahmiyya and Mu'tazila.

<sup>129</sup> Ibn Taymiyya, *al-Taṣīs* (1:101) = *Bayān Talbīs al-Jahmiyya* (1:444). It is amusing that the defenders of Ibn Taymiyya indirectly acknowledge the heresy of this position by protesting that "he was merely paraphrasing the position of those who affirm the

comment on these heretical statements. Can you imagine for an apostate to be more brazen than this, right in the midst of Muslim society?

In another place in the same book he says: "It is obligatorily known that Allāh did not mean by the name of "the One" (*al-Wāḥid*) the negation of the Attributes." He is here alluding to all that entails His "coming" to a place and the like. He continues: "Nor did He mean by it the negation that He can be perceived with the senses, nor the denial of limit and dimension and all such interpretations which were innovated by the Jahmiyya and their followers. Negation or denial of the above is not found in the Book nor the Sunna." And this is on an equal footing with what came before with regard to pure anthropomorphism and plain apostasy.

In another book of his, *Muwāfaqat al-Ma'qūl*, which is in the margin of his *Minhāj*, Ibn Taymiyya asserts that things occur newly in relation to Allāh and that He has a direction according to two kinds of conjecture.<sup>130</sup> And you know, reader, what the Imāms say concerning him who deliberately and intently establishes that Allāh has a direction, unless his saying such a thing is a slip of the tongue or a slip of the pen. Then there is his establishing that the concept of movement

Attributes among the *mutakallimīn*! Mashhūr Ḥasan Salmān, *al-Rudūd wal-Ta'aqqubāt 'alā al-Imām al-Nawawī* (p. 21-22). As this Salmān undoubtedly knows, the truth is that this particular argument of Ibn Taymiyya comes up frequently and favorably enough under his pen [cf. *Bayān Talbīs* (1:548, 1:600, 2:169); *Sharḥ Ḥadīth al-Nuzūl* (69-76); *Majmū' al-Fatāwā* (3:306-310, 13:304-305); *Minhāj* (2:134-135, 192, 198-200, 527)] to be safely attributed to him. Compare to Imām Mālik's statement: "He is neither ascribed a limit nor likened with anything" (*lā yuḥaddad wa-lā yushabbah*). Ibn al-'Arabī said after citing it in *Aḥkām al-Qur'ān* (4:1740): "This [statement] is a pinnacle of *tawḥīd* to which no Muslim preceded Mālik."

<sup>130</sup> Ibn Taymiyya, *Muwāfaqat al-Ma'qūl* on the margins of *Minhāj al-Sunna* (2:75, 1:264, 2:13, 2:26). The *Muwāfaqat* was republished under the title *Dar' Ta'āruḍ al-'Aqlī wal-Naql*.

applies to Allāh, along with all the others who establish such a thing. His denial that there is an eternal sojourn in hellfire has filled creation; so has his doctrine of the "generic pre-existence" of the world (*al-qidam al-naw'ī*).<sup>131</sup>

In his article *Taḥdhīr al-Umma min Du'āt al-Wathaniyya* ("Warning the Community about Those Who Call to Idol-Worship"), written in 1942 and reprinted in his *Maqālāt*, al-Kawtharī berates al-Azhar for allowing the publication of 'Uthmān ibn Sa'īd al-Dārimī's *al-Radd 'alā al-Jahmiyya* which contains phrases like "[Allāh ﷻ] moves if He wishes, descends and ascends if He wishes [...] stands and sits if He wishes;" "Allāh ﷻ has a limit [...] and His place also has a limit, as He is on His Throne above His heavens, and these are two limits;" "if He wished, He would have settled on the back of a gnat" and other enormities.<sup>132</sup> This is identical to Ibn Karrām's doctrine that "Allāh has a body unlike bodies, and a limit."<sup>133</sup> Yet Ibn Taymiyya ardently defends al-Dārimī's views,<sup>134</sup> citing them time and again in *al-Taṣīs Radd Asās al-Taqdīs*<sup>135</sup> – an all-out attack on Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's refutation of anthropomorphism titled *Asās al-Taqdīs* – including the gnat remark.<sup>136</sup>

<sup>131</sup> Al-Kawtharī, *Maqālāt* (p. 350-353).

<sup>132</sup> Al-Kawtharī, *Maqālāt* (p. 378-383, cf. 361-367, 391-406, 420).

<sup>133</sup> See 'Abd al-Qāhir al-Baghdādī, *al-Farq Bayn al-Firaq* (p. 203, 217).

<sup>134</sup> Ibn al-Qayyim in *Ijtimā' al-Juyūsh* (p. 88=p. 143) revealed that Ibn Taymiyya "praised and recommended al-Dārimī's two books [*Naqd al-Jahmiyya* and *al-Radd 'alā Bishr al-Marrīsi*] most strenuously!"

<sup>135</sup> This work was newly printed under the made-up title *Bayān Talbīs al-Jahmiyya fī Taṣīs Bida' ihim al-Kalamiyya*, 2 vols., ed. Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Raḥīm ibn Qāsīm (Makka: Maṭba'at al-Ḥukūma, 1972). Cf. *Bayān Talbīs al-Jahmiyya* (1:426-427, 1:433, 1:443-444, 2:111, 2:157-160, 2:494-495).

<sup>136</sup> *Bayān Talbīs* (1:568, 2:160).

## Ibn Taymiyya's Denial of the Eternity of Hellfire

Ibn Taymiyya affirmed and denied the eternity of hellfire intermittently in the same way he intermittently affirmed and denied the corporeality of the Deity and the beginninglessness of the world. His denial of the eternity of hellfire and his suggestion of its eventual extinction was refuted, among others, by the Commander of the Believers in Ḥadīth Muḥammad ibn Ismā'īl al-Ṣan'ānī in his *Raf' al-Astār li-Ibtāl Adillat al-Qā'ilīn bi-Fanā' al-Nār* ("Exposing the Nullity of the Proofs of Those that Claim that Hellfire Shall Pass Away"), by the great Egyptian Ḥanbalī Jurist Mar'ī ibn Yūsuf al-Karmī al-Maqdisī (d. 1033), author of countless valuable works still extant, in his *Tawqīf al-Fariqayn 'alā Khulūd Ahl al-Dārayn*, and by Shaykh al-Islām Taqī al-Dīn al-Subkī in his treatise *al-I'tibār bi-Baqā' al-Jannati wal-Nār*, published as part of his book *al-Durrat al-Muḍiyya fil-Radd 'alā Ibn Taymiyya*, which also contains two epistles refuting the latter's positions on divorce. In *al-I'tibār*, al-Subkī states:

The doctrine of the Muslims is that Paradise and Hellfire do not pass away. Abū Muḥammad Ibn Ḥazm reported Consensus over the matter<sup>137</sup> and the fact that whoever violates such Consensus is a disbeliever (*kāfir*) by Consensus. There is no

<sup>137</sup> Ibn Ḥazm, *Marātib al-Ijmā'* (p. 193-194).



doubt over this, for it is obligatorily known in the Religion and the evidence to that effect is abundant.<sup>138</sup>

This heretical doctrine was endorsed by Ibn Taymiyya's admirer Ibn Abī al-‘Izz in his commentary on al-Ṭaḥāwī, in flat contradiction of the latter's statement: "The Garden and the Fire are created and shall never be extinguished nor come to an end."<sup>139</sup>

The sound position and the belief of *Ahl al-Sunna* is that the disobedient Muslims who are in the Fire temporarily are not on a par with the disbelievers who are in the Fire forever. The Muslims who remain in the Fire until they are taken out and enter Paradise no longer feel the Fire past the point of burning to the bone, without their skins being renewed, since the Prophet ﷺ said of them: "After being burnt to the bone (*umtuḥishū*) they will be taken out and the water of life will be poured upon them."<sup>140</sup> Allāh ﷻ said: {*Shall we treat the Muslims like the criminals?*} (68:35) and {*It may be that those who disbelieved wish ardently that they were Muslims*} (15:2) *i.e.* when they find themselves in the Fire, in comparison to the Muslims.

<sup>138</sup> Al-Subkī, *al-Durrat al-Muḍiyya fīl-Radd ‘alā Ibn Taymiyya* (3<sup>rd</sup> epistle, *al-I' tibār bi-Baqā' al-Jannati wal-Nār* p. 60).

<sup>139</sup> Cf. Ibn Abī al-‘Izz, *Sharḥ al-Ṭaḥāwiyya* (p. 427-430).

<sup>140</sup> Narrated from Abū Hurayra and Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī by al-Bukhārī and Muslim.

His Invention of a  
Double or Triple *Tawḥīd*

Also among Ibn Taymiyya's *kalām* innovations was his division of *tawḥīd* into two types: *tawḥīd al-rubūbiyya* and *tawḥīd al-ulūhiyya*, respectively, Oneness of Lordship and Oneness of Godhead.<sup>141</sup> The first, he said, consisted in the acknowledgment of Allāh as the Creator of all, a belief shared by believers and non-believers alike. The second, he said, was the affirmation of Allāh as the one true deity and only object of worship, a belief exclusive to believers. His natural conclusion was that "whoever does not know *tawḥīd al-ulūhiyya*, his knowledge of *tawḥīd al-rubūbiyya* is not taken into account because the idolaters also had such knowledge." He then compared the scholars of *kalām* to the Arab idol-worshippers who accepted *tawḥīd al-rubūbiyya* but ignored *tawḥīd al-ulūhiyya*! This dialectic was imitated by Ibn Abī al-'Izz in his commentary on al-Ṭaḥāwī's *'Aqīda*.<sup>142</sup> Ibn Taymiyya's followers also credit him with a third *tawḥīd*, *tawḥīd al-asmā' wal-ṣifāt*. The Algerian Shaykh al-'Arabī ibn al-Tubbānī refuted this innovation in his *Barā'at al-Ash'ariyyīn*, among others.

<sup>141</sup> In his *Fatāwā* (1:219, 2:275); *Minhāj al-Sunna* (2:62); *Risālat Ahl al-Ṣuffa* (p. 34).

<sup>142</sup> But in no other commentary of the same text, not even the "Salafi" commentary on the *Ṭaḥāwiyya* by Ḥasan al-Busnawī, although the latter does follow Ibn Abī al-'Izz in other matters.

Al-Tubbānī's Refutation  
of His Multiple *Tawhīds*

Abū Ḥāmid Ibn Marzūq [Imām al-‘Arabī ibn al-Tubbānī] wrote:

*Tawhīd al-rubūbiyya* and *tawhīd al-ulūhiyya* were invented by Ibn Taymiyya who claimed that all Muslims among the *mutakallimūn* worshipped other than Allāh due to their ignorance of *tawhīd al-ulūhiyya*; he claimed that the only *tawhīd* they knew was *tawhīd al-rubūbiyya*. The latter consists in affirming that Allāh is the Creator of all things, as, he says, the polytheists conceded. He then declared all Muslims to be unbelievers. Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb imitated him in this, and others imitated Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb. The late erudite scholar al-Sayyid Aḥmad ibn Zaynī Daḥlān (d. 1304) looked into this matter in a small section of his treatise *al-Durar al-Saniyya fīl-Radd ‘alā al-Wahhābiyya* (“The Resplendent Pearls in Refuting the Wahhābīs”). So did the servant al-Shaykh Ibrāhīm al-Samannūdī al-Manṣūrī (d. 1314) who spoke excellently in his book *Sa‘ādat al-Dārayn fīl-Radd ‘alāl-Firqatayn al-Wahhābiyya wal-Zāhiriyya* (“The Bliss of the Two Abodes in the Refutation of the Two Sects: Wahhābīs and Zāhirīs”).<sup>143</sup> The late erudite scholar al-Shaykh Salāmat al-‘Azzāmī (d. 1376) also wrote valuable words about it in his book *al-Barāhin al-Sāti‘a fī Radd Ba‘ḍ al-Bida‘ al-Shāi‘a*

<sup>143</sup> Both recently republished in Damascus (2001) and Cairo (2005) respectively.

(“The Radiant Proofs in Refuting Certain Widespread Innovations”). [...]

Imām Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal [...] never said that *tawḥīd* consisted in two parts, one being *tawḥīd al-rubūbiyya* and the other *tawḥīd al-ulūhiyya*. Nor did he ever say that “whoever does not know *tawḥīd al-ulūhiyya*, his knowledge of *tawḥīd al-rubūbiyya* is not taken into account because the idolaters also had such knowledge.” [...] None of the followers of the Followers [...] none of the Successors [...] none of the Companions of the Prophet ﷺ ever said that *tawḥīd* consisted in two parts, one being *tawḥīd al-rubūbiyya* and the other *tawḥīd al-ulūhiyya*, nor did any of them ever say that “whoever does not know *tawḥīd al-ulūhiyya*, his knowledge of *tawḥīd al-rubūbiyya* is not taken into account because the idolaters also had such knowledge.” [...] Nowhere in all the Sunna of the Prophet ﷺ [...] is it related that the Prophet ﷺ ever said or ever taught his Companions that *tawḥīd* consists in two parts, one being *tawḥīd al-rubūbiyya* and the other *tawḥīd al-ulūhiyya*, nor that “whoever does not know *tawḥīd al-ulūhiyya*, his knowledge of *tawḥīd al-rubūbiyya* is not taken into account because the idolaters also had such knowledge.” If mankind and *jinn* joined together to establish that the Prophet ﷺ ever said such a thing, even with an inauthentic chain of transmission, they would not succeed.

The books of the Sunna of the Prophet ﷺ overflow with the fact that the call of the Prophet ﷺ to the people to Allāh was in order that they witness that there is no God except Allāh alone and that Muḥammad is the Messenger of Allāh, and in order that they repudiate idol-worship. One of the most famous illustrations of this is the narration of Mu‘ādh

ibn Jabal when the Prophet ﷺ sent him to Yemen and said to him: "Invite them to the testimony that there is no God but Allāh and Muḥammad is the Messenger [...]" And it is narrated in five of the six books of authentic traditions – and Ibn Ḥibbān declared it sound – that a Bedouin Arab reported the sighting of the new moon to the Prophet ﷺ and the latter ordered the people to fast without asking this man other than to confirm his testimony of faith. According to that drivel of Ibn Taymiyya, it would have been necessary for the Prophet ﷺ to call all people to the *tawḥīd al-ulūhiyya* of which they were ignorant – since *tawḥīd al-rubūbiyya* they knew already – and he should have said to Mu'adh: "Invite them to *tawḥīd al-ulūhiyya*," and he should have asked the Bedouin who had sighted the new moon of Ramadan: "Do you know *tawḥīd al-ulūhiyya*?"

Finally, in His precious Book which falsehood cannot approach whether from the front or from behind, Allāh never decreed belief in *tawḥīd al-ulūhiyya* to His servants, nor did He ever say that "whoever does not know this *tawḥīd*, his knowledge of *tawḥīd al-rubūbiyya* is not taken into account."<sup>144</sup>

Ibn Marzūq is the pseudonym of Shaykh Muḥammad ibn 'Alawī's Shaykh, Muḥammad al-'Arabī ibn al-Tubbānī al-Jazā'irī al-Mālikī al-Makkī (d. 1390) who authored, among other books, *Taḥdhīr al-'Abqarī* and *al-Ta'aqqub al-Mufīd 'alā Hadī al-Zurā'ī al-Shadīd* in refutation of Ibn Taymiyya, Ibn al-Qayyim, and the Wahhābiyya's insinuations against the Ash'arī.<sup>145</sup>

<sup>144</sup> Ibn Marzūq, *Barā'at al-Ash'ariyyīn Min 'Aqā'id al-Mu'tazilati wal-Mukhālifīn* (1:89, 1:94 f.) Chapter reprinted in Ibn Marzūq, *al-Tawassul bil-Nabī ﷺ wal-Ṣāliḥīn* (Istanbul: Hakikat Kitābevi, 1993) p. 25-101.

<sup>145</sup> Cf. Mamdūh, *Tashnīf al-Asmā' bi-Shuyūkh al-Ijāzati wal-Samā'* (1984 ed. p. 375).

## Ibn Taymiyya's Verbose Methodology in Disputation

Ibn Taymiyya's method in debate was to provide a barrage of quotes and citations in support of his positions. In the process, he often mentioned reports or stated positions which, upon closer examination, are dubious either from the viewpoint of transmission or that of content. For example:

- His report of Ibn Baṭṭa's narration whereby Ḥammād ibn Zayd was asked by a man: "Our Lord descends to the heaven of the earth – does that mean that he removes Himself from one place to another place?" (*yataḥawwalu min makān ilā makān?*) Ḥammād replied: "He Himself is in His place, and He comes near His creation in the way that He likes (*huwa fī makānihi yaqrabu min khalqīhi kayfa shā*)."<sup>146</sup> Aside from the questionable status of Ibn Baṭṭa, the doctrine of attributing place to Allāh ﷻ is unheard of among the *Salaf*.
- His report that Iṣḥāq ibn Rāhūyah said to 'Abd Allāh ibn Ṭāhir: "He is able to descend without the Throne being vacant of Him" (*yaqdiru an yanzila min ghayri an yakhlua al-'arshu minh*).<sup>147</sup> Such a statement leaves nothing of the characteristics

<sup>146</sup> Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmū' al-Fatāwā* (5:376). Narrated with its chain by al-Dhahabī in the *Siyar* (8:213, chapter of Bishr ibn al-Sarī).

<sup>147</sup> Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmū' al-Fatāwā* (5:376-377). Also narrated by al-Dhahabī with a sound chain according to al-Albānī in *Mukhtaṣar al-'Uluw* (p. 192 §235).

of creatures except it attributed them to the Creator: body, place, surface, and displacement.

- Al-Bayhaqī in *al-Asmā' wal-Ṣifāt* narrates the reports of Ishāq's encounter with the Emir 'Abd Allāh ibn Ṭāhir with five chains – three of them sound – none of which mention the words “without the Throne being vacant of Him.”<sup>148</sup> This apparent interpolation is nevertheless the foundation of Ibn Taymiyya's position in *Sharḥ Ḥadīth al-Nuzūl* that Allāh Most High descends “in person” yet remains above the Throne “in person.”<sup>149</sup> The phrase was characterized by Muḥammad Abū Zahra (see below) as a dual assertion of the aboveness and belowness of Allāh Most High on the part of Ibn Taymiyya, although strenuously denied by Ibn Taymiyya himself in *Minhāj al-Sunna* and by al-Albānī who defends the latter against Abū Zahra's conclusion in his introduction to *Mukhtaṣar al-'Uluw*.<sup>150</sup>
- His report from Abū 'Umar al-Ṭalamankī's book *al-Wuṣūl ilā Ma'rifat al-Uṣūl*: “Ahl al-Sunna wal-Jamā'a are in agreement (*muttafiqūn*) that Allāh established Himself in person (*bi-dhātihī*) on the Throne.”<sup>151</sup> Al-Dhahabī quotes from the same book the following passage: “The Muslims of *Ahl al-Sunna wal-Jamā'a* have reached Consensus (*ajma' [ū]*) that Allāh is above the heavens in person (*bi-dhātihī*) and is established over His Throne in the mode that He pleases (*kayfa shā*).”<sup>152</sup> Of course, both assertions are false since no such Consensus

<sup>148</sup> *Al-Asmā' wal-Ṣifāt* (Kawthari ed. p. 451-452; Ḥāshidī ed. 2:375-377 §950-953).

<sup>149</sup> *Sharḥ Ḥadīth al-Nuzūl* (p. 42-59).

<sup>150</sup> *Minhāj al-Sunna* (2:248), *Mukhtaṣar al-'Uluw* (p. 40-41, 192-193).

<sup>151</sup> Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmū' al-Fatāwā* (5:189).

<sup>152</sup> Al-Dhahabī, *Mukhtaṣar al-'Uluw* (p. 264 §321). Al-Dhahabī criticizes these assertions: see article “Allāh is Now as He Ever Was” in our *Sunna Notes*.

exists; and the position of *Ahl al-Sunna* is that whoever attributes place to Allāh commits apostasy.

- His statement: "The scholars approved by Allāh and His accepted Friends have narrated that Muḥammad the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ will be seated by His Lord on the Throne next to Him."<sup>153</sup> By "the scholars approved by Allāh and His accepted Friends" he means a minority of Ḥanbalī scholars with anthropomorphist leanings.
- His claim regarding the narration of 'Abd Allāh ibn Khalīfa from 'Umar whereby "the Prophet ﷺ glorified Allāh and said: 'Verily, His Seat of Authority (*kursī*) encompasses the heavens and the earth, and verily He sits on it (*innahu yajlisu 'alayh*) and there does not remain of it [but] a space of four fingers, and verily it groans like the sound of the new saddle when one mounts it, due to His weight pressing down on it'"<sup>154</sup> that "most of *Ahl al-Sunna* accept [this narration]" when their near totality – including his own students al-Dhahabī and Ibn Kathīr – grade it "denounced" (*munkar*), and he himself acknowledges Abū Bakr al-Ismā'īlī's rejection of it among others.<sup>155</sup>
- His statement that "I do not know any of the *Salaf* of the Community nor any of the Imāms, neither Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal nor other than him, that considered these [verses on the Divine Names and Attributes] as part of the *mutashābih*"<sup>156</sup> when everyone has heard the statement of Imām Mālik on *istiwā'* whereby "its modality is inconceivable" (*al-kayfu ghayr ma'qūl*).

<sup>153</sup> Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmū' al-Fatāwā (Muḥaṣṣal al-I'tiqād* ["Specifics of Belief"] 4:374). See our article, "The Prophet's ﷺ Seating on the Throne" in our *Sunna Notes* series.

<sup>154</sup> Narrated by al-Ṭabarī in his *Tafsīr* (3:10-11). Cf. our article on "The Prophet's Seating on the Throne," section titled "The Groaning of the Throne."

<sup>155</sup> In his commentary on *Sūrat al-'Alaq* in Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmū'at Rasā'il* (16:435).

<sup>156</sup> Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmū'at Rasā'il* (13:294).



Al-Baghdādī in *Uṣūl al-Dīn* cites Mālik ibn Anas, the seven jurists of Madīna, and al-Aṣma'ī among those who consider the verse of *istiwā'* one of the *mutashābihāt*. Imām al-Ghazzālī also counted the verses and narrations on the Divine Attributes among the *mutashābihāt* in *al-Mustasfā* and Imām al-Nawawī concurred with him.<sup>157</sup>

- His statements: "The elevation of Allāh ﷻ over the Throne is literal, and the elevation of the creature over the ship is literal" (*lil-Lāhi ta'āla istiwā'un 'alā 'arshihi ḥaqīqatan wa-lil-'abdi istiwā'un 'alā al-fulki ḥaqīqatan*).<sup>158</sup> "Allāh is with us literally and He is above His Throne literally (*Allāhu ma'anā ḥaqīqatan wa-huwa fawqa al-'arshi ḥaqīqatan*). [...] Allāh is with His creation literally and He is above His Throne literally (*Allāhu ma'a khalqihī ḥaqīqatan wa-huwa fawqa al-'arshi ḥaqīqatan*)."<sup>159</sup> Abū Zahra wrote:

It is strange that Ibn Taymiyya gets so terribly angry at those who interpret those texts [on the Divine Attributes] figuratively [...] yet he considers [*in al-Iklīl fil-Mutashābih wal-Ta'wīl*] all the names transmitted about the delights of Paradise to be figurative! [...] If he applies figurativeness here, is it not feasible to do so in order to distance himself wholly from corporeality and preclude doubt from the mind? He might reply that he only follows the texts [...]. Everyone can see that even if the Companions kept mute about that matter, nevertheless, the denial of figurative interpretation was not transmitted from them; and even if the expressions that are narrated indicate resignation (*tafwīd*), nevertheless, there is no affirmation of direction in the expressions that are narrated.<sup>160</sup>

<sup>157</sup> Al-Ghazzālī, *al-Mustasfā* (p. 85); al-Nawawī, *Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* (16:218).

<sup>158</sup> Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmū' al-Fatāwā* (5:199)

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.* (5:103).

<sup>160</sup> Abū Zahra, *Ibn Taymiyya* (p. 229).

## His Climbing Down the Pulpit to Illustrate the Divine Descent

The above statements support Ibn Ḥajar's and Ibn Baṭṭūṭa's reports that Ibn Taymiyya once climbed down the *minbar* in purported illustration of the descent of Allāh ﷻ to the nearest heaven, saying: "Just like this descent of mine!"<sup>161</sup> Ibn Baṭṭūṭa (d. 770) said he witnessed Ibn Taymiyya preach this although his *Riḥla* states, "I arrived Thursday 9 Ramaḍān 726 in Damascus," while Ibn Taymiyya was already imprisoned on Monday 16 Sha'ḅān 726 – according to Ibn Kathīr's citation of al-Birzālī – and remained so until his death two years later. However, Ibn Baṭṭūṭa gathered his travel notes late in life and they were edited by Ibn Marzūq and Ibn Juzay.<sup>162</sup> Further, Ibn Ḥajar's citation of al-Ṭūfī is proof that Ibn Baṭṭūṭa is not the only contemporary to attribute this statement to Ibn Taymiyya. Therefore, it is likely the discrepancy is due to a simple inaccuracy and not, as claimed with typical elegance by one of the Wahhābīs in his *Sharḥ Qaṣīdat Ibn al-Qayyim*, "the fabrication, by Allāh, of a shameless liar!"

<sup>161</sup> Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, *Riḥla* (1:110), Ibn Ḥajar, *al-Durar al-Kāmina* (1:180) from al-Ṭūfī as already cited, and al-Kattānī, *Fahras al-Fahāris* (1:201-202).

<sup>162</sup> Cf. Ibn Ḥajar, *al-Durar* (5:227)

## His Appearance

Al-Dhahabī said:

He was poor and possessed no property. His clothes were those of a common jurist: a wide-sleeved floating robe (*farajiyya*), an overcoat (*dilq*), a thirty-dirham turban (*'imāma*), and cheap shoes. His hair was cut. He was medium-sized and wide-shouldered. His eyes seemed two eloquent tongues.<sup>163</sup>

## The Revival of His Teachings by the Wahhābi Movement

Ibn Taymiyya's burial was attended by thousands of people. His teachings were by and large forgotten until Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Najdī brought them back from oblivion. Later, the "Salafī" movement revived them through a large-scale publication campaign backed up by political and financial activism from the 1930s to our day.

<sup>163</sup> In Ibn Rajab, *Dhayl Ṭabaqāt al-Ḥanābila* (2:395).

Imām Muḥammad Abū Zahra said in his book on the history of the *madhāhib* in Islām:

The "Salafīs" and Ibn Taymiyya assert that settledness takes place over the Throne. [...] Ibn Taymiyya strenuously asserts that Allāh descends, and can be above (*fawq*) and below (*taḥt*) "without how" [...] and that the school of the *Salaf* is the affirmation of everything that the Qur'ān stated concerning aboveness (*fawqiyya*), belowness (*taḥtiyya*), and establishment over the Throne.<sup>164</sup>

The Wahnābīs appeared in the Arabian desert [...] and revived the School of Ibn Taymiyya. The founder of the Wahnābiyya is Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahnāb who died in 1786. He had studied the books of Ibn Taymiyya which became inestimable in his sight, deepening his involvement with them until he brought them from the realm of opinion into the realm of practice. In reality, the Wahnābīs did not add anything to what Ibn Taymiyya had asserted but they exaggerated it beyond his intent, instituting practical matters which Ibn Taymiyya had not addressed because they were not widespread in his time. These can be summarized thus:

1. They did not view worship ('*ibāda*) in the same way that Islām had stipulated in the Qur'ān and Sunna and as Ibn Taymiyya had. Rather, they included customs ('*ādāt*) into the province of Islām so that Muslims would be bound by them as well. Thus, they declared cigarette smoking *ḥarām* and exaggerated this ruling to the point that their general public considered the smoker a *mushrik*. As a result they resembled the Khawārij who used to declare apostate who ever committed a sin.

<sup>164</sup> Abū Zahra, *Tārīkh al-Madhāhib al-Islamiyya* (p. 320-322).

2. In the beginning of their movement they would also declare coffee and whatever resembled it *ḥarām* to themselves but it seems that they became more indulgent as time went by.
3. The Wahnābīs did not restrain themselves to proselytism alone, but resorted to warmongering against whoever disagreed with them. They did so on the grounds that they were fighting innovations, and innovations are an evil that must be fought, and it is obligatory to command good and forbid evil. [...] The leader of Wahnābī thought in the field of war and battle was Muḥammad ibn Sa'ūd, the ancestor of the ruling Sa'ūdī family in the Arabian lands. He was a brother-in-law to Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahnāb and embraced his *madhhab*, defending it fervently and calling unto it by force of arms. He announced that he was doing this so as to uphold the Sunna and eradicate *bid'a*. Perhaps, this religious mission that turned violent doubled as a rebellion against Ottoman rule. [...] Then the governor of Egypt, Muḥammad 'Alī, faced them and pounced on the Wahnābīs with his formidable army, routing them in the course of several battles. At that time their military force was reduced and confined to the Arab tribes. Riyadh and its vicinity were the center for this permanent *da'wa* that would turn violent whenever they gathered strength and lie still whenever they found violent opposition.
4. Whenever they were able to seize a town or city they would come to the tombs and turn them into desolate ruins [...] and they would destroy whatever mosques were with the tombs also. [...]

5. Their brutality did not stop there. They also came to whatever graves were visible and similarly destroyed them. When the ruler of the Ḥijāz regions caved in to them they destroyed all the graves of the Companions and razed them to the ground. [...]
6. They would harp on small matters which they condemned even though these matters had nothing to do with idolatry nor with whatever leads to idolatry, such as photography. We found this in their *fatwās* and epistles at the hands of their Ulema, although their rulers ignore this saying of theirs completely and cast it by the wayside.
7. They expanded the meaning of *bid'ā* to strange proportions, to the point that they actually claimed that draping the walls of the noble *Rawḍa* is an innovated matter. Hence they forbade the renewal of the drapes that were in it, until they fell in tatters and became unsightly, were it not for the light that pours out to all that are in the presence of the Prophet ﷺ or feel that in this place was the abode of Revelation on the Master of Messengers. In fact, we find among them, in addition to this, those who consider that the Muslim's expression "our liege-lord (*sayyidunā*) Muḥammad" ﷺ is an impermissible *bid'ā*. They show true extremism about this and, for the sake of their mission, use foul and furious language until most people actually flee from them as fast as they can.
8. In truth, the Wahhābīs have actualized the opinions of Ibn Taymiyya and are extremely zealous followers and supporters of those views. They adopted the positions of Ibn Taymiyya which we explained in our discussion of those who call themselves "Salafīyya." However, they enlarged the

meaning of *bid' a* and construed as innovations things that have no relation to worship. [...] In fact, it has been noticed that the Ulema of the Wahhābis consider their own opinions correct and not possibly wrong, while they consider the opinions of others wrong and not possibly correct. More than that, they consider what others do in the way of erecting tombs and circumambulating them close to idolatry. In this respect, they are like the Khawārij who used to declare those who dissented with them apostate and fight them as we have already mentioned. This was a relatively harmless matter in the days when they were cloistered in the desert and not trespassing its boundaries; but when they mixed with others and the lands of Ḥijāz fell into the hands of the Sa'ūd family, the matter became of the utmost gravity. This is why the late King 'Abd al-'Azīz of the Sa'ūd family opposed them, and treated their opinions as confined to themselves and irrelevant to others.<sup>165</sup>

<sup>165</sup> Abū Zahra, *Tārīkh al-Madhāhib al-Islamiyya* (p. 235-238 = p. 212-214).

Selected Taymiyyan  
Heresiographical Literature

- Akḥṭā' Ibn Taymiyya fī Ḥaqqi Rasūl Allāh ﷺ wa-Ahli Baytihi* ("Ibn Taymiyya's Errors Concerning the Messenger ﷺ and the People of His House"). Maḥmūd al-Sayyid Ṣubayḥ. (Cairo 2003). The most detailed scholarly analysis to date.
- 'Aqīdat al-Salaf al-Ṣāliḥ Ahlu al-Sunnati wal-Jamā'a fī Āyāt wa-Aḥādīth al-Ṣifāt Kamā Rawāhā al-Thiqāt* ("Doctrine of the Pious Predecessors, the People of the Sunna and Congregation, Concerning the Verses and Ḥadīths of the Divine Attributes as Narrated by the Reliable Authorities"). Muḥammad 'Ādil 'Azīza al-Kayyālī. 600 p. (Damascus 2001). Contains analyses of the Ash'arī 'aqīda of Ibn Kathīr, al-Nawawī, Ibn Ḥajar, Ibn 'Abd al-Salām, al-Shawkānī, et al.
- Ayyuhā al-Qarniyyūna Hallā Faqihṭum?* ("O Devil-Heads, Do You Not Understand Yet?"). Sayyid 'Izz al-Dīn Māḍī Abī al-'Azā'im. 448p. (Cairo 1996). An aggressively styled encyclopedia of refutations on the issues of intercession, *madad*, *tawassul*, tombs, *ziyāra*, *tabarruk*, vows, 'iṣma, and others.
- Barā'at al-Ash'ariyyīn min 'Aqā'id al-Mu'tazilati wal-Mukhālifīn* ("The Ash'arīs are Innocent of What the Mu'tazilīs and Dissenters Believe"). Sayyid Muḥammad 'Arabī ibn al-Tubbānī al-Jazā'irī al-Saṭifī al-Makkī. 647 p. (Damascus 1967). An en-



cyclopedia of Sunni proofs against the teachings of Ibn Taymiyya in 2 large volumes, the second of which focusses on his offensive positions regarding *Ahl Bayt*.

*Al-Baṣā'ir li-Munkirī al-Tawassul bi-Ahl al-Qabā'ir*. Ḥamd Allāh al-Dājwī al-Sahāranfūrī 380 p. 1385 H. Waqf Ikhlās offset repr. An encyclopedia of proofs against Wahhābīs containing useful chapters on Ibn Taymiyya.

*Al-Farq al-‘Azīm bayn al-Tanzīh wal-Tajsīm wa-Yalīh al-Muqtaṭaf fī Naqd al-Tuḥaf* (“The Tremendous Difference Between Transcendence and Anthropomorphism”). By Sa‘īd ‘Abd al-Laṭīf Fawdah. 72 p. (Amman 2001). Contains a valuable critique of al-Shawkānī’s ‘*Aqīda* entitled *al-Tuḥaf fī Madhāhib al-Salaf* although al-Kayyālī deems its attribution to al-Shawkānī spurious.

*Fatāwā Ibn Taymiyya fil-Mizān* (“Ibn Taymiyya’s *Fatwās* Under Scrutiny”) by the Mauritanian Shaykh Muḥammad Aḥmad Miskah ibn al-‘Atīq al-Ya‘qūbī (Damascus 2000) mostly cites and sources Ibn Taymiyya *verbatim* in the following chapters:

Foreword

Introduction

1. Sayings of the Scholars on Ibn Taymiyya
2. The *Hashwiyya*: Ibn Taymiyya’s group
3. The doctrine of *Ahl al-Sunna wal-Jamā‘a*  
Al-Ghazzālī’s *Qawā‘id al-Aḥkām*  
Ibn ‘Abd al-Salām’s *Mulḥa*

Chapter One: Salient characteristics of Ibn Taymiyya’s *Fatāwā*

1. The prevalence of *Tashbīh* and *Tajsīm* in the *Fatāwā* of Ibn Taymiyya
2. Ibn Taymiyya’s aggressiveness against his opponents and his manipulation of their words

3. His style of verbose argumentation
4. Concerning his scholarly trustworthiness
5. Concerning his agenda

Chapter Two: Refutation of Ibn Taymiyya's position on the direction [of the Deity]

1. Refutation of direction in the Qur'ān and Sunna
2. Refutation of direction by rational proofs
  - First Corollary
  - Second Corollary:  
Ibn Taymiyya's virulent denial of *kalām* terminology
3. Refuting the sayings of those who affirm direction
4. Status of those who affirm direction according to *Ahl al-Sunna*

Chapter Three: Refutation of Ibn Taymiyya's creed of "contingencies subsisting in Allāh ﷻ" and his belief in the pre-existence of the world

1. Establishing his creed from his own words
2. Refutation of his creed in the pre-existence of the world
3. The Divine transcendence beyond the subsistence of contingencies in Him ﷻ

Chapter Four: Refutation of Ibn Taymiyya's statement that the Qur'ān is created and that Allāh speaks with a voice

1. Establishing his creed from his own words
2. Refutation of his creed that the Qur'ān is created and his attribution of voice and silence to Allāh Most High

Chapter Five: His creed in the non-*'iṣma* of the Prophets, upon them blessings and peace

Chapter Six: His statement that travel [solely] to visit the grave of the Prophet ﷺ is a sin and that *tawassul* through him is *shirk* or leads to *shirk*

Chapter Seven: His statement that Hellfire comes to an end and his opinion on resurrection

Chapter Eight: His proclivity for insulting the pious servants of Allāh

Chapter Nine: His probing the positions of the philosophers and their influence on him and that of other non-believers

Chapter Ten: Some issues in which he violated Consensus.

*Ibnu Taymiyyata Laysa Salafiyyan* ("Ibn Taymiyya is No *Salafi*") by Manṣūr Muḥammad Muḥammad Uways. 267 p. (Cairo: Dār al-Nahḍat al-‘Arabiyya, 1970).

*Al-Ijhāz li-Man Ankara al-Majāz* ("What Lies in Store for Those Who Deny Figurative Meanings") by Shaykh ‘Īsā al-Ḥimyarī. 400 p. (1998).

*Al-Kāshif al-Ṣaghīr ‘an ‘Aqā'id Ibn Taymiyya* ("Minor Exposure of the Beliefs of Ibn Taymiyya"). By Sa‘īd ‘Abd al-Laṭīf Fawdah. 500 p. (Amman 2000).

*Manāhij al-Ta‘līm: Qirā'atun Naqdiyyatun li-Muqarrarāt al-Tawḥīd* by the Saudi Shaykh Ḥasan ibn Farḥān al-Mālikī of the Banū Mālik, a head-on critique of the Wahhābī curriculum in Saudi and Islamic institutions worldwide.

*Al-Qawl al-Wajīh fī Tanzīh Allāh Ta‘ālā ‘an al-Tashbīh* ("The Eminent Discourse Concerning Divine Transcendence beyond All Resemblance to Created Things"). By Shaykh al-Sayyid Abūl-Ḥasanayn ‘Abd Allāh ibn ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Makkī al-Hāshimī رجه الله 111 p. (Amman 1995).

*Risāla fil-Radd ‘alā Ibn Taymiyya fī Mas‘alati Ḥawāditha lā Awwala Lahā* ("Epistle in Refutation of Ibn Taymiyya in the Question of ‘Created Matters without Beginning’"). By al-Imām Bahā’ al-Dīn al-Ikhmīmī al-Miṣrī (700-764). Ed. Sa‘īd

‘Abd al-Laṭīf Fawdah. 128 p. (Amman 1998). This was written in refutation of Ibn Taymiyya’s belief that the world is of a pre-eternal nature and has existed with Allāh since pre-eternity as an “ever-abiding created object” (*makhlūqan dā’iman*), thus making it necessarily existent in His Essence (*mūjaban bil-dhāt*) and preventing Him from acting deliberately (*lā fā‘ilan bil-ikhtiyār*), elevated is He beyond that! Al-Būṭī in *Kubrā al-Yaqīniyyāt al-Kawniyya* called this belief Aristotelianism and, before him, Abū Ishāq al-Isfarāyīnī said that whoever holds such a doctrine is considered a *kāfir*.

*Risāla Sharīfa fī-Mā Yata‘allāqu bi-kam al-Bāqī min ‘Umr al-Dunyā* (“Noble Epistle Concerning the Remainder of the Life of this World”). By Imām al-Ṣan‘ānī. Ed. al-Waṣabī al-Mathānī. (San‘ā’ 1992).

*Rudūd ‘alā Shubuhāt al-Salafiyya* (“Refutation of the Insinuations of the Salafis”) 375 p. By Muḥammad Nūrī al-Shaykh Rashīd al-Naqshbandī al-Dirshawī, a student of Dr. Sa‘īd al-Būṭī. 1987 Maṭba‘at al-Sabāḥ (Syria).

*Al-Salafiyyat al-Mu‘āshira: Munāqashāt wa-Rudūd* (“Contemporary Salafism: Discussions and Refutations”). Sayyid Abūl-Ḥasanayn ‘Abd Allāh ibn ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Makkī al-Hāshimī. 230 p. (Amman 1996).

*Taṣḥīḥ al-Mafāhīm al-‘Aqdiyya fīl-Ṣifāt al-Ilāhiyya* (“The Validation of Doctrinal Understandings of the Divine Attributes”). By Shaykh ‘Īsā ibn Mānī‘ al-Ḥimyarī. 300 p. (Cairo 1998). Shaykh ‘Umar al-Nushūqātī informed us that this work was actually authored by Farīd al-Bāji.

Al-Nabhānī's Verdict  
on Ibn Taymiyya

Al-Qāḍī Yūsuf al-Nabhānī said in *Shawāhid al-Ḥaqq* that he saw in his dream that Ibn Taymiyya had been forgiven but that he was in a lower level of Paradise than Taqī al-Dīn al-Subkī. He never declared Ibn Taymiyya a disbeliever nor did any of the reliable Ulema of *Ahl al-Sunna*. May Allāh forgive them, take us back to Him as Muslims, and join us with His righteous servants. *Āmīn*.



## SHAYKH GHĀWJĪ'S INTRODUCTION<sup>166</sup>

### THE SALAF, THE KHALAF, TA'WĪL AND THE CORRECTION OF ERRORS IN 'AQĪDA

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#### The *Salaf*

The *Salaf* are those that preceded (*al-mutaqaddimūn*). The *salaf* of a man are his forefathers. Al-Kāshānī said: "The pious *Salaf* are the first generation, {those with a firm foothold in learning} (3:7), who are guided with the guidance of the Prophet ﷺ and preserving his Sunna. Allāh Most High chose them for the companionship of His Prophet, picked them for leadership in His Religion, and was well-pleased with them as Imāms for the *Umma*. They waged *jihād* for the sake of Allāh in the true and best sense, acting with utmost faithfulness and sincerity toward the *Umma*."

Abū al-Ḥasan [al-Ash'arī] said: "They are the Companions with regard to their sayings and deeds and in all [the rulings] they interpreted and extracted through their juridical exertions."

<sup>166</sup> Text translated from Shaykh Wahbī Sulaymān Ghāwjī al-Albānī's *Masā'il fī 'Ilm al-Tawhīd* (al-Shāriqa: 1999) p. 29-62 – itself condensed from the introduction to his edition of Ibn Jamā'a's *Idāh al-Dalīl fī Qaṭ'i Ḥujajī Ahl al-Tā'īl* (Cairo: Dār al-Salām, 1990) – as reviewed with him in his Damascus home in 2003. Author's and translator's footnotes are marked respectively [A] and [T].

Al-Ghazzālī said: “By the *Salaf* I mean the *Madhhab* of the Companions and the *Tābi‘īn*.” Al-Bājūrī, the author of the commentary on *Jawharat al-Tawhīd*, said: “What is meant by the *Salaf* is those that came before among the Prophets, the Companions, the Successors, and their successors, especially the Four Imāms.”

Shaykh Maḥmūd al-Khafājī said, “The specification of a certain time is insufficient in defining this term. In addition to chronological precedence, one must add the condition that their doctrine be in conformity with the [letter of the] Book and the Sunna as well as their spirit. Whoever doctrinally contravenes the Book and the Sunna is in no way a [real] *Salafī* even if he lived among the Companions, the Successors, and their Successors.”<sup>167</sup>

Shaykh Sa‘īd Ramaḍān al-Būṭī said – may the Lord of all preserve him – in agreement with the above:

When the lexical meaning of *salaf* is meant, it becomes a relative term usable by all the successive periods of time like the term “before” to mean exactly the same thing. As for the conventional, technical meaning for that term, it is the first three centuries in the history of this Islamic *Umma* – the *Umma* of our Master Muḥammad ﷺ. The source for this is the saying of the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ as narrated from Ibn Mas‘ūd ؓ by the Two Arch-Masters: “The best of generations are my century, then those that follow them, then those that follow the latter. After that, a people will appear whose testimony precedes their oath and whose oath precedes their testimony.”

<sup>167</sup> Maḥmūd al-Khafājī, *al-‘Aqīdat al-Islāmiyya Bayn al-Salafīyya wal-Mu‘tazila* (p. 213).  
[A] Even less those who doctrinally contravene the Book and the Sunna and who are not even from the preferred centuries but reared up at the tail-end of times! [T]



He then quoted Ibn 'Abd al-Barr: "Foremost merit is firmly established for the generality of the Muslims of those first three centuries, but it might not apply to some of the individuals. Some might come in later centuries that are even better than those individuals."<sup>168</sup>

So then, those who call themselves "Salafiyya" and decline to be affiliated with one of the Four Schools that are agreed upon in the Muslim *Umma* fall into a new innovation (*bid' a*) while they claim to "flee from the innovation of Madhhabism," as they say [...]. Another meaning of the word *Salaf* carries even more danger; namely, the fact that the Mu'tazila, the Khawārij, the Jahmiyya, the Karrāmiyya, and the innovative Murji'a all appeared in those first three centuries.<sup>169</sup> They are therefore of the *Salaf* chronologically and lexically, but they are definitely not of the pious *Salaf*.

It follows that the claim of those individuals calling themselves "Salafiyya" compels them to say that they are of the pious *Salaf*! This is an impressive claim, but for every claim the proof must be produced.

O the delight of being affiliated to one of the Four Sunni Schools, since it is so well-known that their founders were of the Imāms of the pious *Salaf* historically, factually, reputedly and truly! Glory and thanks to Allāh for the testimony of the Muslims of the first three centuries, among whom are the experts of the Qur'ān, the Sunna, 'Aqīda, and *Fiqh*, and for the *de facto* testimony of their times and moral conduct – Allāh Most High have mercy on them! – and for the testimony of those after the three centuries among the Ulema of Qur'ān, Sunna, 'Aqīda, and *Fiqh* to our very day and until *mā shā' Allāh*.

<sup>168</sup> Al-Būṭī, *al-Salafiyya Marḥalatun Zamaniyyatun Mubārakatun Lā Madhhabun Islāmī* (p. 109) quoting Ibn Ḥajar, *Fath al-Bārī* (7:4). [A]

<sup>169</sup> On those sects see our "Sunni Glossary" in *The Four Imāms and Their Schools*. [T]

Now, whosoever among them attains the rank of qualified scholarly exertion (*ijtihād*) in the knowledge of the Book, the Sunna, and the sayings of the pious *Salaf*, and whose qualification and rank in this the people of learning acknowledge without dispute, then, if he so wishes, let him not affiliate himself to any *Madhhab*, and Allāh is the Grantor of success.

### The *Khalaf*

The *Khalaf* are the largest and most numerous group of the trustworthy Imāms and Ulema among the Jurists, *Mujtahids*, experts of the principles of the Religion (*uṣūl al-dīn*), and foremost leaders of *Tafsīr*, ḥadīth, and language that came after the first three centuries.

Many of them have formulated, concerning the verses and ḥadīths of the Divine Attributes, what can be described as specific interpretation (*ta'wīl tafṣīlī*). The latter is a subsection of what the *Salaf* had meant in general terms, as when they said: "While declaring Allāh transcendent beyond any resemblance to creation," the *Khalaf* added: "Perhaps the meaning is such-and-such." A case in point is their statement that what is meant by *istiwā'* in the saying of Allāh Most High, {*The Merciful established Himself over the Throne*} (20:4), is "establishing dominion" (*istīlā'*), or "ending up" (*intihā'*), or "perfection and completion" (*al-kamāl wal-tamām*), as in {*and rises firm upon its stalk*} (48:29). And so forth, according to what the Arabic language permits, in conformity with the affirmation (*ithbāt*) of the Attribute in question for Allāh Most High while declaring Him transcendent beyond any resemblance to creatures.

Not everyone that came after the first three centuries interprets the [verses and ḥadīths of the] Divine Attributes specifically. Rather, many consider the avoidance of probing the Divine Attributes safer. For interpretation is conjectural discourse, and the one who makes that conjecture might not attribute what is absolutely true and correct to Allāh Most High. Moreover, interpretation is a burden which we assume without having been burdened with it by Allāh Most High. It is to delve into something into which neither the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ nor his Companions ﷺ delved except very little.

It is true that in some cases there is no escape from specific interpretation, as when one discusses with a layperson ('āmmī) to teach them, and when the latter lives in a materialistic environment that gives a body to the exalted Deity (as is the case with Jews and Christians), or an environment that claims resemblance between Allāh Most High and creation (as did the Jahmiyya and the misguided Murji'a who claimed that Allāh Most High is "higher than a mountain" or that "His length is seven of His own hand-spans") – our refuge is in Allāh! In such a case interpretation comes first exclusively.

Specific interpretation, therefore, seems like the remedy to an ailment – and a remedy is given only in cases of illness. When the illness is over, there is no longer need for the remedy and the matter goes back to normal.

One reads in *al-Musāyara* by the Imām, Jurist, and expert of principles, Kamāl al-Dīn Ibn al-Humām, and its commentary by the savant Ibn Abī Sharīf, on the verse {*The Merciful established Himself over the Throne*} (20:4): "In sum, it is obligatory to believe that He, Most High, established Himself over the Throne together with negating resemblance to creatures. As for the

meaning of the establishment (*istiwāʿ*) being dominion (*istilāʿ*), it is a matter of possibility while there is no proof for it being specifically intended.”<sup>170</sup>

See also *Istihālat al-Maʿiyyati bil-Dhāt* by Shaykh Muḥammad al-Khaḍir al-Shinqīṭī, page 169, in explanation of the saying of Allāh Most High, {*Alas, my grief that I was unmindful of the side of Allāh*} (39:56) and that the meaning, as Ibn ʿAbbās ؓ said, is “What I have wasted of the Divine reward.”<sup>171</sup>

The following are some texts from the Book of Allāh for which there is no escape from specific interpretation:

Allāh Most High said, {*Allāh (Himself) does mock them, leaving them to wander blindly on in their contumacy*} (2:15). Mockery is not attributed to Allāh Most High since the literal sense of mockery is not a noble trait, so what is meant is that Allāh requited them with the like of their own mockery.<sup>172</sup>

Allāh Most High also said, {*And the calf was made to sink into their hearts*} (2:93): this is a metaphor (*majāz*) for love of the [golden] Calf – our refuge is in Allāh!

Allāh Most High also said, {*Unto Allāh belong the East and the West, and whithersoever you turn, there is Allāh’s countenance*} (2:115). What is meant by the countenance (*wajh*) of Allāh? It is the direction of prayer (*qibla*).<sup>173</sup>

<sup>170</sup> *Al-Musāyara maʿa al-Musāmara* (p. 33). [A]

<sup>171</sup> Cf. al-Alūsī, *Rūḥ al-Maʿānī* (24:17) and *maqṭūʿ* in the *Tafsīrs* of al-Ṭabarī (24:19), al-Baghawī (4:85), Ibn al-Jawzī (7:192), and *al-Durr al-Manthūr*. Cf. n. 186 and 384 *infra*. [T]

<sup>172</sup> Cf. Ibn ʿAbd al-Salām in *al-Ishāra ilā al-Ijāz fī Baʿd Anwāʿ al-Majāz* (“The Metaphors of the Qurʾān”): “His sarcasm (*sukhriyya*), mockery (*istihzāʿ*), scheming (*makr*), and deceit (*khiḍʿ*): All of these are metaphors of similitude or metonymies naming the result by the name of its cause, His sarcasm being caused by theirs, His mockery by theirs, His scheming by theirs, and His deceit by theirs.” [T]

<sup>173</sup> Ibn ʿAbbās in Ibn Abī Ḥātim cf. *Durr*; Qatāda and Mujāhid in al-Ṭabarī; al-Ḥasan, Qatāda, Mujāhid, and Muqātil ibn Ḥayyān in al-Baghawī. [T]

Allāh Most High also said, {*Or deemed you that you would enter Paradise while yet Allāh knows not those of you who really strive, nor knows those (of you) who are steadfast?*} (3:142). The knowledge of Allāh according to *Ahl al-Sunna* is pre-eternal (*qadīm*) as are the rest of His Attributes, in no wise preceded by ignorance. So the meaning is the manifestation (*ẓuhūr*) of His knowledge.

Allāh Most High also said, {*And Allāh would turn to you in mercy; but those who follow vain desires would have you go tremendously astray*} (4:27). The will of Allāh cannot be repelled nor can anyone delay it in any way. Therefore what is meant here is love (*al-maḥabba*) and good pleasure (*al-riḍā*).

Allāh Most High also said, {*I created the jinns and humankind only that they might worship me*} (51:56). How can the Divine intent be delayed in the least? For most people do not believe! Therefore what is meant here is [His] command and love.<sup>174</sup> Just as He said, {*And they are ordered naught else than to serve Allāh, keeping religion pure for Him*} (98:5).

Allāh Most High also said, {*He is Allāh in the heavens and in the earth. He knows both your secret and your utterance, and He knows what you earn*} (6:3). What is the interpretation of

<sup>174</sup> As for the meaning of worship, Ibn 'Abbās said: "[Meaning] to know Me" as cited in *al-Risālat al-Qushayriyya*. This is also the explanation of Ibn Jurayj and Mujāhid as in Ibn Kathīr and al-Qurṭubī's *Tafsīrs* respectively. Sidi Muṣṭafā Baṣīr: "This is confirmed in the Qur'ān itself by the question of Allāh Most High: {*And (remember) when your Lord brought forth from the Children of Ādam, from their loins, their seed, and made them testify against themselves, (saying): Am I not your Lord? They said: Yes, verily. We testify. Lest you should say at the Day of Resurrection: Lo! of this we were unaware*} (7:172)." Maḥmūd and Sharīf: "He created the world so that it may be used as a sign pointing to Him, just as He said: {*And (also) in yourselves. Can you then not see?*} (51:21). This is why it was said, 'Those who know themselves most know their Lord most.'" Al-Būṭī: "That is, you can see the Divine Attributes in yourself: His power, His creation, His knowledge, His wisdom; for the fingerprints of His Attributes are in His creation." [T]

this verse? Together with His saying, {*And He it is Who in the heaven is God, and on the earth God. He is the Wise, the Knower*} (43:84); and His saying, {*Have you taken security from Him who is in the heaven that He will not cause the earth to swallow you*} (67:16); and His saying, {*He is with you where-soever you may be*} (57:4); and His saying, {*He is with them when by night they hold discourse displeasing unto Him. Allāh ever surrounds what they do*} (4:108); and His saying, {*And We are nearer unto him than you are, but you see not*} (50:16). And so forth.

*Ta'wīl* [...] is equally practiced by the *Salaf* and *Khalaf* in general terms. Imām 'Alī al-Qārī said – Allāh have mercy on him – in *Mirqāt al-Mafātīḥ Sharḥ Mishkāt al-Maṣābiḥ*:

The *Salaf* and *Khalaf* agree over *ta'wīl*. The difference between them is only in terminology (*al-khilāfu baynahumā lafẓī*) as they have Consensus (*ijmā'*) over the fact that the outward term must not be taken literally (*ṣarf al-lafẓi min zāhiriḥ*). However, the *ta'wīl* of the *Salaf* is general (*ijmālī*) as they practiced resignation (*tafwīd*) to Allāh Most High of the intended meaning of the wording, which is not taken literally as Allāh is beyond that. As for the *Khalaf*, their *ta'wīl* is specific (*tafṣīlī*) because they were forced to recur to it due to the abundance of innovators. They did not intend, in so doing, to diverge from the pious *Salaf* – Allāh is our refuge from such a thought! It is only that necessity demanded it, in their time, due to the many anthropomorphists (*mujassima*), Jahmiyya, and others of the people of misguidance, lest they prevail over the minds of the general public. They intended thereby the deterrence and routing of their arguments. This is

why many of them apologized and said, "if only our times had the same purity of faith as that of the *Salaf!*" So what is obligatory upon us is what we mentioned regarding belief, together with the negation of resemblance. And if it is feared for laypersons that they do not understand *istiwā'* – short of saying it means *istilā'* (dominion) – except in the sense of contact (*ittiṣāl*) and the like among the requirements of corporeality such as contiguity (*muḥādhāt*), and if it is feared that they are not actually precluding such corporeal requirements, then there is no harm in reorienting their understanding to the meaning of *istilā'* in strict avoidance of what is forbidden, and in saying, "*Istiwā'* means *istilā'*."<sup>175</sup>

### *Ta'wīl*<sup>176</sup>

The basic lexical meaning of *ta'wīl* is the final resort and ultimate fate of something as when you say, "the matter has returned (*āla al-amru*) to such and such" and you have referred it or literally caused it to return (*awwaltahu ta'wīlan*). This is the lexical meaning of *ta'wīl*.

*Tafsīr* is also called *ta'wīl*. Allāh Most High said, {*I will announce unto you the interpretation (ta'wīl) of what you could not bear with patience*} (18:78) and {*and more seemly in the end (ta'wīlan)*} (4:59). And that is the elaboration of the meanings referred to by the words.<sup>177</sup> In the same sense al-Ṭabarī and Shaykh Jamāl al-Dīn al-Qāsimī named their *Tafsīrs*, *Jāmi' al-Bayān min Ta'wīl [Āy] al-Qur'ān* and *Maḥāsin al-Ta'wīl* respectively.

<sup>175</sup> Al-Qārī, *Mirqāt al-Mafātīḥ* (Pakistani ed. 1:160 = 1994 ed. 1:280) cf. *al-Musāyara ma' al-Musāmara* (p. 33). [A]

<sup>176</sup> See also [http://www.livingislam.org/n/tawil\\_e.html](http://www.livingislam.org/n/tawil_e.html).

<sup>177</sup> Al-Fakhr al-Rāzī, *al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr* (12:176). [A]

*Ta'wīl* is equally shared by the *Salaf* and *Khalaf* in general terms. The *Salaf* upheld general *ta'wīl* with regard to the Divine Attributes: "Let them pass just as they came," at the same time as {*There is nothing whatsoever like Him and He is the All-Hearing, the All-Seeing*} (42:11)[...]. And they upheld specific *ta'wīl* with regard to some of those Attributes, over and above general *ta'wīl*, as when they said of His saying, {*And He is with you wheresoever you may be*} (57:4): "Meaning, with His knowledge."<sup>178</sup>

{*There remains but the countenance of your Lord*} (55:27), that is, Himself (*dhātuh*) – may He be glorified!<sup>179</sup>

Ibn 'Abbās ؓ said, concerning the saying of Allāh Most High, {*And her Lord accepted her with full acceptance*} (3:37), that is, He caused her to tread the path of the felicitous, as in al-Qurṭubī.<sup>180</sup>

Allāh Most High said, {*And whithersoever you turn, there is Allāh's countenance*} (2:115), the *qibla* of Allāh wherever you turn yourselves, whether East or West.<sup>181</sup>

Al-Bukhārī narrated in his *Ṣaḥīḥ* from Ṭāwūs, from Ibn 'Abbās ؓ on the verse, {*Then turned He to the heaven when it was smoke, and said unto it and unto the earth: Come both of you (ītiyā), willingly or unwillingly*}, that is, "Give [all your benefits]" (*a'ṭiyā*). {*They said: We come (ataynā), obedient*} (41:11), that is, "We do give" (*a'ṭaynā*).<sup>182</sup>

<sup>178</sup> *Tafsīr Sufyān al-Thawrī* and *Tafsīr al-Baghawī*. [T]

<sup>179</sup> Cf. al-Naḥḥās, *Ma'anī al-Qur'ān*, Ibn al-Jawzī, *Zād al-Masīr*. [T]

<sup>180</sup> And *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*. [T]

<sup>181</sup> See note 173. [T]

<sup>182</sup> Ibn Abī Ḥātim and al-Ṭabarī as in *al-Durr al-Manthūr*; al-Baghawī; al-Alūsī. [T]



Allāh Most High said, {*His seat of authority (kursī) includes the heavens and the earth*} (2:255). Ibn 'Abbās ؓ said, "That is, His knowledge," as in the abridgment of Ibn Kathīr's *Tafsīr*.<sup>183</sup>

<sup>183</sup> Narrated *marfū'* from the Prophet ﷺ by Sufyān al-Thawrī with a sound chain according to Ibn Ḥajar in *Faḥ al-Bārī* (1959 ed. 8:199) and al-Ṭabarānī in *al-Sunna*; and *mawqūf* from Ibn 'Abbās by al-Ṭabarī with three sound chains in his *Tafsīr* (3:9-11), al-Māwardī in his *Tafsīr* (1:908), al-Suyūṭī in *al-Durr al-Manthūr* (1:327), al-Shawkānī in *Faḥ al-Qadīr* (1:245), and others. Also narrated in "suspended" form (*mu'allaq*) of al-Bukhārī in his *Ṣaḥīḥ* from Sa'īd ibn Jubayr (Book of *Tafsīr*, chapter on the saying of Allāh ﷻ: {*And if you go in fear, then (pray) standing or on horseback*}) (2:239). Its chains are documented by Ibn Ḥajar in *Taghliq al-Ta'liq* (2/4:185-186) where he shows that Sufyān al-Thawrī, 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Maḥdī, and Wakī' narrated it *marfū'* from the Prophet ﷺ, although in the *Faḥ* he declares the *mawqūf* version from Ibn 'Abbās more likely. Al-Ṭabarī chooses it as the most correct explanation: "The external wording of the Qur'ān indicates the correctness of the report from Ibn 'Abbās that it [the *kursī*] is His 'ilm [...] and the original sense of *al-kursī* is *al-'ilm*." Another authentically related *mawqūf* report from Ibn 'Abbās has, "The *kursī* is the footstool (*mawḍī' al-qadamayn*)." The difference between the two is that in the first report he explicitly attributes knowledge to Allāh ﷻ while in the second he does not attribute the feet nor the footstool to Him. The latter is narrated with a sound chain by al-Ṭabarānī in *al-Kabīr* (12:39 §12404) as stated by al-Haythamī (6:323), al-Bayhaqī in *al-Asma'* (2:196 §758), Ibn Khuzayma in *al-Tawḥīd* (p. 108), al-Ḥākim (2:282), who declared it *ṣaḥīḥ*, al-Khaṭīb in *Tārīkh Baghdād* (9:251), Ibn Abī Shayba in *al-'Arsh* (p. 79 §61), Abū al-Shaykh in *al-'Azama* (2:552-553 §196, 2:582 §216); and *marfū'* – erroneously – by al-Dāraquṭnī in *al-Ṣifāt* (p. 49-50 §36) and Ibn Mandah in *al-Radd 'alā al-Jahmiyya* (p. 44-45). Ibn al-Jawzī in *al-'Ilal* (1:22) declared that it should not be considered a *marfū'* Prophetic report, a verdict confirmed by al-Dhahabī in his *Mizān* (2:265), Ibn Kathīr in his *Tafsīr* (1:317), and Ibn Ḥajar in *al-Tahdhīb* (4:274), cf. Aḥḍab, *Zawā'id* (7:37-39 §1383). Al-Bayhaqī said: "He did not attribute the feet [to Allāh ﷻ], nor did Abū Mūsā al-Ash'arī in his own identical statement [*Asma'* (2:296-297 §859) with a weak chain], and this [non-attributive form] seems the soundest version. Its interpretation among the authorities is that the *kursī* in relation to the Throne is as the footstool is in relation to the couch under which a footstool is placed for the person reclining on it [...] At any rate, this is a halted report which is not narrated from the Prophet ﷺ. As for our early companions, they did not explain such cases nor did they preoccupy themselves with interpreting them, believing, at the same time, that Allāh ﷻ is One without parts or limbs." Al-Qurṭubī in his *Tafsīr* (3:278) cites a similar explanation from Ibn 'Aṭīyya. Elsewhere (2:272) al-Bayhaqī, like al-Bukhārī and al-Ṭabarī before him, gives precedence to Ibn 'Abbās's authentic explanation of the *kursī* as "His Knowledge." Ibn Kathīr states his preference for the narration of the footstool in the introduction of his *Bidāya* while al-Bayḍāwī (1:555) considers it "pure imagery" (*tamthīl mujarrad*) "and there is no seat and no one sitting in reality" (*wa-lā kursī fil-ḥaqīqa wa-lā qā'id*). [T]

And He said, {*And your Lord shall arrive*} (89:22), that is, His command (*amruhu*) and His decree (*qaḍā'uhu*), and His signs have appeared, as stated in al-Shawkānī's *Tafsīr* (5:440). Ibn 'Abbās said, "His command and His decree," as did al-Ḥasan.<sup>184</sup>

I mentioned numerous similar examples for specific interpretation among the pious *Salaf* in my book *al-Īmānu bil-Lāhi Ta'ālā* (p. 140)[...].

[More of] the specific interpretation of the *Salaf* has been transmitted to us in some places, as is mentioned below with regard to "withness" (*ma'iyya*), while many of the later accomplished experts refrained from interpretation in the specific matters that can be appropriately confined to their wordings, while resigning their intended meaning to Allāh Most High. This shows how methodologically close the *Salaf* and *Khalaf* are in reality.<sup>185</sup>

#### Preconditions for Accepting *Ta'wīl*

The savant Muḥammad Abū Zahra – Allāh have mercy on him – said:

*Ta'wīl* consists in taking a wording away from its literal meaning to another possible meaning which is not apparent in it. There are three preconditions for *ta'wīl*:

1. The original wording must carry the possibility, even remotely, of the interpretive meaning in a way that does not make that meaning totally alien to it.
2. There must be a compelling reason for *ta'wīl*. For example, the letter of the text must somehow contravene an obliga-

<sup>184</sup> Cf. al-Wāḥidī and al-Baghawī. [T]

<sup>185</sup> Cf. al-Shinqīṭī, *Istihālat al-Ma'iyati bil-Dhāt* (p. 72). [A]

torily known, well-established and well-known rule of the Religion; that is, it contradicts a text (*naṣṣ*) stronger than it in transmission; for example, when a ḥadīth contradicts a verse while the ḥadīth can be interpreted figuratively (*qābilan lil-ta'wīl*). In such a case the ḥadīth is interpreted figuratively or even rejected [...].

3. The interpretation must not be unsupported (*min ghayri sanad*), but rather, it must be supported and drawn (*lahu sanad wa-mustamadd*) from what makes [knowledge] necessary (*al-mūjibāt*).

Ibn Daqīq al-‘Īd said:

If *ta'wīl* is close to the language of the Arabs it is not disapproved; if far, we neither confirm nor deny it (*tawaqqafnā fīh*) while believing in its intended meaning together with upholding transcendence. Whatever is understood in those words of the communication of the Arabs, we endorse it without hesitation, as in the saying of Allāh Most High, {*Alas, my grief that I was unmindful of the side of Allāh*} (39:56): we say it means the right owed to Allāh and what is obligatory to pay Him.<sup>186</sup>

<sup>186</sup> In Shaykh ‘Abd al-‘Azīm al-Zarqānī, *Manāhil al-‘Irfān fī ‘Ulūm al-Qur’ān* (2:186). [A] Ibn Ḥajar reports Ibn Daqīq al-‘Īd as saying: “We say concerning the various Attributes that they are real and true according to the meaning Allāh ﷻ wills for them. As for those who interpret them, we look at their interpretation: if it is close to the rules of language in use among the Arabs we do not reject it, and if it is far we relinquish it and return to basic belief while declaring Transcendence.” In *Faṭḥ al-Bārī* (1959 ed. 13:383). Al-Qārī for his part also quotes Ibn Daqīq al-‘Īd as saying: “If interpretation stems from an evident and prevalent figurative understanding, then it ought to be applied without reserve. If it stems from a far-fetched, aberrant figurative understanding, then it ought to be left out. If one is as good as the other, then difference in its permissibility or impermissibility is a matter of juridical exertion. This matter does not present any danger to the two sides of the argument.” *Mirqāt al-Mafātīḥ* (1892 ed. 2:136-137=1994 ed. 3:298-301). [T]

Qāḍī Abū Bakr Ibn al-‘Arabī said, after some precious words:

The sound ḥadīths in this chapter – of the Divine Attributes – fall into three categories. The first category: Whatever is narrated which denotes pure perfection utterly devoid of defects. It is obligatory to believe them. The second category: Whatever is narrated which denotes pure imperfection. This can never be attributed to Allāh Most High in any way whatsoever and He is by absolute necessity expressly devoid of such a description, as in the ḥadīth: “My servant! I was sick and you never visited Me”<sup>187</sup> and the like. The third category: Whatever denotes perfection but suggests likeness to creatures (*tashbīh*).

In the first category there is, for example: Oneness (*waḥdāniyya*), Knowledge (‘*ilm*), Power (*qudra*), Will (*irāda*), Life (*ḥayāt*), Hearing (*sam‘*), Encompassment (*iḥāṭa*), Decree of all circumstances (*taqdīr*), Disposal (*tadbīr*), and Exemption from any match (*mathīl*) or counterpart (*naẓīr*). There is nothing to object to such reports.

As for the second category, for example His saying – Most High! – {*Who is it that will lend unto Allāh a goodly loan*} (2:245), or in the ḥadīth *qudsī*: “I was hungry and you did not feed Me, I was thirsty [...]”<sup>188</sup> then both those that are protected [against confusion] and those that are outside [belief], the learned and the ignorant know that the above are figurative expressions (*kināya*) for the tenor of the meaning pertaining to these defective states, but He attributed them to His glorious and sanctified Self as an immense honor and homage to His friend, to make hearts tender and soft. This, O

<sup>187</sup> Narrated from Abū Hurayra by al-Bukhārī and Muslim. [T]

<sup>188</sup> *Ibid.* [T]

people of sound minds, is a warning to you regarding all possible wordings. For He has mentioned the safe wordings that denote perfection and are obligatory to believe in His regard; and He has mentioned the defective wordings and lowly meanings of which He is categorically and absolutely exempt. Now, if these two types of wordings are made to face one another, it becomes obligatory for every sensible believer to treat the latter as figurative expressions for the meanings that are appropriate for Him, and negate from Him what is impermissible to ascribe to Him.

Thus, His statements about “the arm/hand” (*al-yad*) “the forearm” (*al-sā'id*), “the palm” (*al-kaff*), and “the finger” (*al-iṣba'*) are forceful and expressive style (*'ibārātun badī'atun*) pointing to lofty meanings. For the forearm among the Arabs denotes strength, grip, and force. Do you not see what al-Zubayr said when he struck an enemy fighter with the sword and cleaved him in two until he reached what was under him, and he was told: “That is some sword!” But he replied: “It is not the sword but the *sā'id*!”<sup>189</sup> This is the reason the Prophet ﷺ said to Abū al-Aḥwaṣ about the latter's father: “He maims camels then calls them, ‘Allāh's Cripples’ – but the forearm (*sā'id*) of Allāh is stronger and His blade sharper!”<sup>190</sup> This is a threat for him because of his ugly deeds and as a warning of Divine disgrace and requital. It is in this context that he attributed a forearm to Allāh – for the entire matter belongs to Allāh – just as he attributed a blade to Him.

<sup>189</sup> Cf. al-Zamakhsharī, *al-Fā'iḳ* (1:88). [T]

<sup>190</sup> Narrated from Mālik ibn Naḍla by Aḥmad, al-Ṭabarānī in *al-Kabīr* (19:283), and Ibn al-Qānī in *Mu'jam al-Ṣaḥāba* (3:42). [T]

Similarly, the saying of the Prophet ﷺ: “Truly, *ṣadaqa* falls into the palm of the Merciful”<sup>191</sup> by which he denoted the palm of the pauper as an honor for the latter. One of the scholars even said that in the saying, “The upper hand is better than the lower hand,”<sup>192</sup> the upper hand refers to the hand of the beggar who is given and takes the *ṣadaqa* for that reason. So the palm was attributed to Him as an honor for it. In the same way He said, {*the she-camel of Allāh*}<sup>193</sup> (90:13), and there are many more examples of this.

We have already clarified the use of the fingers and its wisdom in the context of the transformation effected by them.<sup>194</sup> What is turned around by the fingers is easier, lighter, and faster. Therefore, the Creator wanted to show the lightness of the heavens, the earth, and all creation in comparison to His Power, and to express the swiftness of the heart’s transformation by placing it between the two fingers as well as its helplessness and insignificance. Both the heart and all creatures are as nothing to the Merciful with respect to His

<sup>191</sup> See n. 429. [T]

<sup>192</sup> Narrated from Ḥakīm ibn Hizām, Ibn ‘Umar, Abū Hurayra, and Abū Umāma by the Nine except Ibn Mājāh. [T]

<sup>193</sup> Al-Nawawī: “A possessive of honor and exclusivity, as one says of the Ka’ba ‘the House of Allāh’ *et cetera*, and Allāh knows best.” *Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* (16:166). [T]

<sup>194</sup> In the two ḥadīths, [1] “Allāh places the heavens on a finger, the earths on a finger, the trees on a finger, the undersoil on a finger, and all creatures on a finger.” Narrated from Ibn Mas‘ūd by al-Bukhārī, Muslim, al-Tirmidhī, and Aḥmad. [2] “There is no heart except it lies between the two fingers of the Merciful. If He wishes, He will set it aright; and if He wishes, He will lead it astray.” Narrated from ‘Abd Allāh ibn ‘Amr by Muslim and Aḥmad, from Anas by al-Tirmidhī (*ḥasan ṣaḥīḥ*) and Ibn Mājāh, and from al-Nawwās ibn Sam‘ān al-Kilābī by Aḥmad, al-Nasā’ī, Ibn Mājāh, Ibn Ḥibbān, al-Ḥākim, and others, all with sound chains. Al-Ḥākim declared the ḥadīth sound. The continuation of the ḥadīth states that the Prophet ﷺ used to say: “O Transformer of hearts! Make firm our hearts in Your Religion,” and that he also said: “And the balance is in the hand of the Merciful, He elevates a people while he abases others and so on until the Day of Resurrection.” On these ḥadīths see al-Nawawī’s *ta’wīl* in our *Ash’arī School* and the article “The Hand of Allāh” in our *Sunna Notes* series. [T]

power over them and their insignificance. It was also said that "between the two fingers" is a figurative expression for the two dispositions. One disposition comes from the angel inspiring one to choose goodness and confirm truth, the other coming from the devil inspiring one to choose evil and deny truth.

As for the cubit/arm (*dhirā'*), we have noted that it was mentioned in absolute terms without attribution to Allāh Most High Who said, {*And then insert him in a chain whereof the length is seventy cubits*} (69:32). As for the ḥadīth in which is found the term "the *dhirā'* of *al-Jabbār*,"<sup>195</sup> it is inauthentic [...]. Rather, the sound-chained version from Abū Hurayra states, "The thickness of the skin of the disbeliever will be forty cubits" unmodified and without further additions. We do not look twice at the ḥadīth containing an addition.<sup>196</sup>

#### The Later Need for *Ta'wīl* According to *Ahl al-Sunna*

Shaykh 'Abd al-'Azīm al-Zarqānī said – Allāh have mercy on him:

1. *Ta'wīl* is obedience to the order we were given of assenting to the ambiguous texts (*al-mutashābih*) and adhering to the unambiguous (*al-muḥkam*), while understanding the former in the light of the latter, since the meaning of the latter is manifest, contrary to that of the former.
2. *Ta'wīl* is true and correct so that the Believer does not fall into contradictions when he reads certain verses, for example,

<sup>195</sup> Narrated from Abū Hurayra by Aḥmad through 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn 'Abd Allāh ibn Dīnār whose ḥadīth forms no proof if it contains singularities. The same ḥadīth is narrated by Muslim, al-Tirmidhī, and Aḥmad without the terms in question. [T]

<sup>196</sup> Ibn al-'Arabī, *al-'Awāṣim min al-Qawāsim* ('Ammār al-Ṭālibī ed. 2:42f.). [A]

the attribution of “an eye” to Allāh Most High, “eyes,” “two hands,” and “hands”; or that He is in the heaven and in the earth, and that He is with His creation anywhere they be, and so forth.

If we leave the texts to their apparent meaning we will fall into contradiction. This is impossible in the glorious Qur’ān: {*If it had been from other than Allāh they would have found therein much incongruity*} (4:82). However, when we exempt Allāh from any resemblance whatsoever to His creation in all such texts, then resign their meaning to Him, we become safe from contradictions in our understanding and make the Qur’ān safe from any misperceived incongruity in it.

Further, it makes no difference whether *ta’wīl* is general or specific since it is the only way contradiction and contravention of meanings that pertain to the Divine Attributes and the glorious Book can be avoided.

3. *Ta’wīl* – whether general or specific – is the path of the pious *Salaf* among the Companions and those after them, and these are the most proficient of all human beings in Islām after the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ.
4. *Ta’wīl* as followed by *Ahl al-Sunna wal-Jamā‘a* is the protection of the general public in particular, by Divine permission, from falling into aberrant comparisons and anthropomorphism.
5. As mentioned, recourse to specific and detailed *ta’wīl* is on the basis of need.



6. Among the preconditions of *ta'wīl* is that it must conform to the principles of the Arabic language and rhetorical style among the Arabs. As for what does not, then such *ta'wīl* is neither licit nor acceptable.<sup>197</sup>

An example of the latter is the *ta'wīl* of the Bāṭiniyya and the people of innovation – refuge is in Allāh!

### *Ta'wīl* Does Not Mean Negation of the Attributes

A certain type among the seekers of knowledge erroneously thinks that *ta'wīl* of the attribute of the “laughter” of Allāh Most High to mean His mercy – as done by al-Bukhārī in his *Ṣaḥīḥ* – is a negation (*naḥī*) of the attribute of laughter from Allāh Most High. Allāh forbid! He also thinks that *ta'wīl* of the attribute of *istiwā'* to mean elevation or dominion (*istilā'*) as opposed to settlement and sitting, is a negation of the attribute of *istiwā'* from Allāh Most High. He also thinks that *ta'wīl* of the witness (*ma'iyya*) of Allāh Most High with His creation to mean the witness of knowledge and encompassment (*iḥāṭa*) is a negation of the attribute of *ma'iyya* from Allāh Most High. Refuge is in Allāh! When did the overwhelming masses of the Muslims among the pious *Salaf* and those that trod their path ever negate the Divine Attributes when they are the reliable trustees in receiving knowledge and conveying it to those after them? May Allāh be glorified!

<sup>197</sup> *Manāhil al-'Irfān*. [A] I did not find the quotation in the *Manāhil* nor is it referenced to it in the identical text printed in the introduction of *Idāh al-Dalīl* (p. 61-62). It appears to be from Abū Zahra's *Uṣūl al-Fiqh* or the words of Shaykh Ghāwjī himself but he could not positively confirm this upon review, and Allāh knows best. [T]

The most erudite, accomplished scholar and proof in the Religion, al-Kawtharī said – Allāh have mercy on him:

{*The Merciful established Himself over the Throne*} (20:5): Whoever denies that the Merciful established Himself on the Throne has denied a verse from the glorious *Dhikr* and thereby commits disbelief. However, the established *istiwā'* for Allāh Most High is an *istiwā'* that befits His Majesty according to the meaning intended by Allāh Most High and by the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ, without probing the meaning, in accordance with the path of the *Salaf* such as Ibn Mahdī.

The path of the *Khalaf* is to understand this to mean sovereignty (*mulk*) and the like, as dictated by language. In this there is no negation of the verse. This can never be said of them! As for understanding it to mean “sitting” and “settlement,” then this is manifest deviance.<sup>198</sup>

Note the difference between the above discourse and that of the author of the *Nūniyya* poem who claims:

“And the Throne, they emptied it of the Most Merciful!”<sup>199</sup>

It seems that the above writer considers the truth to be that Allāh Most High sits on the Throne and fills its vacant spot – our refuge is in Allāh! This is very grave.

Worse than the above is the view of the author’s teacher [Ibn Taymiyya] as related by the ḥadīth Master and commentator of the Qur’ān, Abū Ḥayyān, who was dazzled by him for some time then abandoned him and loathed him when he read the following words by him. Abū Ḥayyān said:

<sup>198</sup> Al-Kawtharī, commentary on al-Bayhaqī’s *al-Asmā’ wal-Ṣifāt* (p. 249). [A]

<sup>199</sup> Ibn al-Qayyim, *Nūniyya*. [T]

I read in a book by Aḥmad ibn Taymiyya – that man who is our contemporary – in his handwriting, which he titled “Book of the Throne” (*Kitāb al-‘Arsh*), that Allāh Most High sits on the *Kursī* and leaves a spot vacant on it on which He makes the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ sit with Him. Al-Tāj Muḥammad ibn ‘Alī ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq al-Bārribārī obtained it from him by ruse, after he led him to think that he was going to promote his cause. He took it from him and we read this in it.<sup>200</sup>

<sup>200</sup> Abū Ḥayyān al-Andalusī, *al-Nahr al-Mādd* (1:254), and there is no power nor might except in Allāh. [A] Ḥajjī Khalifa said: “Ibn Taymiyya authored a book titled *al-‘Arsh* in which he stated that Allāh sits on the *Kursī* and leaves some space vacant for the Prophet ﷺ to sit next to him. Abū Ḥayyān al-Andalusī mentioned it in [his Qur’anic commentary entitled] *al-Nahr* and said that he read it in Ibn Taymiyya’s own handwriting.” Ḥajjī Khalifa, *Kashf al-Ẓunūn* (2:1438). This mention was removed from the printed edition of both Abū Ḥayyān’s commentaries *al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ* and *al-Nahr al-Mādd min al-Baḥr* [passage on *Āyat al-Kursī*] by their Cairo publisher as the latter acknowledged it himself. See al-Kawtharī’s note in his commentary on al-Subkī’s *al-Sayf al-Ṣāqil* (p. 96-97) and al-Ghumārī’s *Bida‘ al-Tafāsīr* (p. 156). [T]

Putting to Rest Certain Insinuations and Warning  
of Certain Scholarly Errors That Pertain to Doctrine

The Issue of Limit (*Hadd*) in the Attributes and Names

1. Imām Abū Ḥanīfa – Allāh have mercy on him – said in *al-Fiqh al-Akbar*: “He ﷻ is ‘something’ yet not like things, and the meaning of something is that we affirm His existence without body, substance, accident, limit or counterpart.”<sup>201</sup>

Imām Aḥmad used to say: “Allāh Most High has two hands that are an attribute of His. They are not limbs. Nor are they made of parts. Nor are they a body nor are they corporeal. Nor are they among things limited, composites, portions nor limbs. Nor is any analogy permissible on that basis.<sup>202</sup> Nor does He have an elbow nor a muscle nor anything else of what their saying ‘hand’ entails except what the noble Qur’ān said.”<sup>203</sup> Abū al-Faḍl al-Tamīmī the head of the Ḥanbalis in Baghdād said:

Aḥmad rebuked whoever attributed a body to Allāh [...].  
Names are taken from the Divine Law and from language.  
The linguists use that name [*i.e.*, “body”] for something

<sup>201</sup> In al-Qārī’s *Sharḥ al-Fiqh al-Akbar* (p. 36). [A] Or: “He is an entity but not in the sense of created entities.” Hamid Algar has: “He is a thing, but unlike other things; by saying ‘thing,’ we intend merely to affirm His reality. He has neither body nor substance, neither accidental property nor limit, neither opposite nor like nor similitude.” [T]

<sup>202</sup> Such as saying, as the anthropomorphists do: “Since ‘your Lord is not one-eyed,’ therefore we affirm two eyes for Him.” [T]

<sup>203</sup> Cf. *Ṭabaqāt al-Ḥanābila*, “Imām Aḥmad’s Doctrine” (2:391). [A]

possessing length, width, density, complexity, image, and composition. Allāh Most Exalted is completely free of all that and nothing was reported in the Divine Law to that effect, so it is false.

The ḥadīth Master al-Bayhaqī cited it in his book *Manāqib al-Imām Aḥmad*.

Imām Abū Ja'far al-Ṭaḥāwī said in *Bayān al-Sunnati wal-Jamā'a*:

Allāh Most Glorious is beyond having limits placed on Him, or having boundaries, or having parts, limbs or organs! Nor is He contained by the six directions as all created things are.

Ibn Baṭṭāl said of the verse {for what I created with both My Hands} (38:75):

In this verse there is the affirmation of two hands for Allāh Most High. They are two attributes of His and not limbs, contrary to what the anthropomorphists who affirm the Attributes and the Jahmiyya who deny them say.<sup>204</sup>

In contrast to the above, 'Uthmān ibn Sa'īd al-Dārimī (not the compiler of the *Sunan* but a different man) said:

Allāh Most High has a limit which none but He knows and it is impermissible for anyone to imagine that His limit possesses a boundary. However, we believe in the limit and we commit that to Allāh. Further, place is also a limit and He is over His Throne above His heavens, so these are two limits (*ḥaddān ithnān*) [...]. Therefore, whoever claims He has no limit has denied the Qur'ān.<sup>205</sup>

<sup>204</sup> *Faḥ al-Bārī* (13:393). [A]

<sup>205</sup> *Al-Naqḍ* (p. 24). [A]

As for Ibn Taymiyya, he said:

It is well-known that the Book, the Sunna, and the Consensus nowhere say that all bodies (*ajsām*) are created, and nowhere say that Allāh Himself is not a body. Nor did any of the Imāms of the Muslims ever say such a thing.<sup>206</sup> Therefore if I also choose not to say it, it does not expel me from *fiṭra* nor from *Sharī'a*.<sup>207</sup>

Ibn Taymiyya also said in *Muwāfaqat al-Manqūl*:

There is agreement one and all among the Muslims and the disbelievers [*sic*] that Allāh Most High is in the heaven and they ascribed it to Him as a limit except al-Marrisī the misguided and his friends. Even little boys that have not reached puberty know this: when a boy is sad he raises his hand to his Lord and calls unto Him in the heaven and nowhere else. Everybody knows of Allāh and His place (*makānih*) better than the Jahmiyya! [...]. All this and its like are corroborations and proofs for a limit, and whoever does not admit it has committed disbelief in the Divine Revelation and has denied the verses of Allāh!<sup>208</sup>

Al-Dhahabī rejected this position of his teacher and said:

Exalted is Allāh beyond being ascribed a limit or being described other than in the terms He described Himself or taught His Messengers, according to the meaning He wants, without similitude nor modality – {*There is nothing*

<sup>206</sup> The contrary is true. See n. 127. [T]

<sup>207</sup> Al-Kawtharī, marginalia on al-Jazarī's *al-Maṣ'ad al-Aḥmad* (p. 839). [A] Cf. n. 128. [T]

<sup>208</sup> *Muwāfaqat Sharīḥ al-Ma'qūl* (2:29). [A] This book, originally published in the margins of *Minhāj al-Sunna al-Nabawiyya*, was republished under the title *Dar' Ta'āruḍ al-'Aqli wal-Naql* (2:58-59). [T]

*whatsoever like Him, and He is the All-Hearing, the All-Seeing*  
(42:11).<sup>209</sup>

Ibn Taymiyya also said:

There is not, in the Book of Allāh, nor in the Sunna of His Messenger ﷺ, nor in the words of any of the *Salaf* of the Community and its Imāms, anything saying that He is not a body and that His attributes are not bodies and accidents (*a' rād*). Therefore, to negate meanings established in the Law by negating wordings whose meanings neither Law nor reason ever negated is ignorance and misguidance!<sup>210</sup>

We already cited the words of Abū Ḥanīfa, Aḥmad, al-Tamīmī, and al-Ṭaḥāwī negating limit and corporeality for Allāh Most High.<sup>211</sup>

2. The saying of Allāh Most High, {*The Merciful established Himself over the Throne*} (20:5).

Ibn Ishāq [Abū Bakr al-Ṣibghī] said: "He established himself without 'how.'" The transmitted reports from the *Salaf* to that

<sup>209</sup> *Siyar A'lām al-Nubalā'* (Risāla ed. 16:97). [A] Al-Dhahabī also says in *Mizān al-I'tidāl* (3:507): "There is no text for either the denying or the asserting [of a limit for Allāh] while there is nothing like unto Allāh whatsoever. Therefore, whoever asserts a limit to Allāh is told: 'You have given limits to Allāh by your view without proof from a text, and he who has limits is [necessarily] created – exalted is Allāh beyond this!' while the one who asserts a limit says to the other: 'You have reduced your Lord to a nonexistent thing, for there is no limit to the nonexistent.' Therefore, whoever affirms Transcendence for Allāh and keeps silent, he is safe and has followed the road of the *Salaf*." Ibn Ḥajar in *Lisān al-Mizān* (5:114) rejects al-Dhahabī's reasoning as fallacious: "Al-Dhahabī's words, 'the one who asserts a limit says to the other: <You have reduced your Lord to a nonexistent thing, for there is no limit to the nonexistent>' are untrue. We do not grant that to deny limit to Allāh is tantamount to reducing Him to the nonexistent after the certitude of His existence." Note that al-Dhahabī does not explicitly endorse those words. [T]

<sup>210</sup> [*Al-Tāṣīs*] (1:101). [A] See note 395. [T]

<sup>211</sup> See more additional references on the heresy of attributing limits in the chapter on Imām Aḥmad in our *Four Imāms and their Schools*. [T]

effect are many, and to this path points the School of al-Shāfi‘ī – Allāh Most High have mercy on him – and this is the position of Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, al-Ḥusayn ibn al-Faḍl al-Bajalī, and, among the later authorities, Abū Sulaymān al-Khaṭṭābī, as stated in *al-Asmā’ wal-Ṣifāt* by Imām al-Bayhaqī.<sup>212</sup>

When Rabī‘at al-Raī – the teacher of Imām Mālik, Allāh have mercy on both of them – was asked about the saying of Allāh Most High, {*The Merciful established Himself over the Throne*} (20:5), and “How did He establish Himself?” he said:

“The how is unknown, the establishment is inconceivable (*ghayr ma‘qūl*), and it is your obligation to believe in this.”<sup>213</sup>

Imām Aḥmad said – Allāh Most High have mercy on him:

We believe that Allāh Most High is over the Throne howsoever He wants and in the way He wants, without circumscribable limit nor describable attribute whatsoever. The Attributes of Allāh are from Him and to Him and He is as He described Himself, {*Vision comprehends Him not*} (6:103).<sup>214</sup>

Al-Ṭaḥāwī also said in his summation of Imām Abū Ḥanīfa’s doctrine – Allāh have mercy on both of them [as per the Madīna ms. of the *Ṭaḥāwiyya* and its commentary by al-Bābartī]:

The Throne and the Footstool are true; He is in no need of the Throne and that which is beneath it; He encompasses all things and that which is above it, and what He has created is incapable of encompassing Him.

<sup>212</sup> *Al-Asmā’ wal-Ṣifāt* (p. 409-410). [A]

<sup>213</sup> *Ibid.* [A]

<sup>214</sup> Ibn Taymiyya, *Radd Ta’arūḍ al-Naql [al-Muwāfaqa]* (2:30) and al-Khallāl’s *Kitāb al-Sunna*. [A] Also narrated from Ḥanbal ibn Ishāq by Abū Ya‘lā in *Ibtāl al-Ta’wīl* per Ibn Taymiyya, *al-Ta’āsīs = Bayān Talbīs* (2:173). [T]



What is above the Throne of the Merciful is *Umm al-Kitāb*.

Whereas Ibn Taymiyya said:

“He is – exalted is He! – above His heavens, over the Throne, separate from His creatures, and despite this He is with them wheresoever they are.”<sup>215</sup>

And he said [in *al-Taʿsīs*]:

“The Creator Most High and Exalted is above the world literally, not in the sense of an aboveness of rank.”<sup>216</sup>

Similarly, Shaykh Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ al-ʿUthaymīn said in his book *ʿAqīdat Ahl al-Sunna* – prefaced by Shaykh ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz ibn Bāz:

“Whoever has such attributes is with His creatures literally even if He is above them and on His Throne literally, {*There is nothing whatsoever like Him, and He is the All-Hearing, the All-Seeing*} (42:11).”<sup>217</sup>

He also said in one of his *fatwās*:

In sum, our doctrine [concerning {*with*} in such verses as {*And He is with you wheresoever you may be*} (57:4) and {*He is with them wheresoever they may be*} (58:7)] is that Allāh Most High possesses literal “withness” with His very Essence (*maʿiyya ḥaqīqiyya dhātiyya*) in the way that befits Him<sup>218</sup> and entails His encompassment of all things with His knowledge, power, hearing, sight, authority, and disposal [...]”<sup>219</sup>

<sup>215</sup> Ibn Taymiyya, *Fatāwā* (3:390-393). [A]

<sup>216</sup> [*Al-Taʿsīs*] (1:101). [A]

<sup>217</sup> *ʿAqīdat Ahl al-Sunna wal-Jamāʿa* (p. 9). [A]

<sup>218</sup> Anthropomorphists always follow up the greatest enormities with the phrase “in the way that befits Him,” which they imagine exonerates them of *tashbih*. [T]

<sup>219</sup> ʿUthaymīn, *Fatāwā fīl-ʿAqīda*. [T]

See the rebuttal of Ibn ‘Uthaymīn in Shaykh ‘Abd Allāh al-Ḥawwās al-Najdī’s epistle entitled *al-Nuqūl al-Ṣaḥīḥatu al-Wāḍiḥa ‘an al-Salaf al-Ṣāliḥ fī Ma‘nā al-Ma‘iyyat al-Ilāhiyyat al-Ḥaqīqiyya* (“The Clear Sound Reports from the Pious Predecessors on the Meaning of the Literal Divine Witness”).

Ibn Taymiyya further said in his commentary on the ḥadīth of the Descent:

The established position – and it is the correct position and the position received from the Predecessors of the Community and its Imāms<sup>220</sup> – is that He is above the Throne unceasingly and the Throne is never devoid of Him, together with His approach and descent (*dunuwwih wa-nuzūlih*) to the nearest heaven without the Throne being above Him.<sup>221</sup>

He even said, “The Scholars approved by Allāh and His accepted Friends have narrated that Muḥammad the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ will be seated by His Lord on the Throne next to Him.”<sup>222</sup>

Shaykh ‘Abd al-‘Azīz ibn Bāz said in one of his *fatwās*: “The statement that Allāh exists in every place is the greatest *kufr*.”

<sup>220</sup> Typical of Ibn Taymiyya’s polemical method is *tahwīl* – the bombastic attempt to canonize his own position as being that of the Book, the Sunna, the *Salaf*, the Imāms, etc. and to constantly demonize the position of those he tries to refute as being that of Jahmīs, Christians, Jews, Hindus, Brahmans etc. cf. notes 281, 315, 343, 376, 378, 399 [...]. His student Ibn al-Qayyim faithfully emulates his style: “This is a position rejected by the Book, the Sunna, the Consensus of the Companions, as well as the evidence given by reason, common sense, and Pristine Disposition, and is the position of one who does not know his own soul let alone the souls of others!” Ibn al-Qayyim, *al-Rūḥ* (1975 ed. p. 111=1998 ed. p. 286). [T]

<sup>221</sup> *Sharḥ Ḥadīth al-Nuzūl* (p. 66). [A] On the Sunni understanding of the “Descent” see “Allāh’s Descent” in our *Sunna Notes* series. [T]

<sup>222</sup> Ibn Taymiyya’s *Fatāwā* (3:374). [A] Cf. above, p. 92 and note 153. [T]

Then he said, "Because Allāh is above His Throne, above all His creatures."<sup>223</sup>

I ask, what is the patent, unambiguous difference between Ibn 'Uthaymīn's statement that Allāh is "with His creatures literally," the claim that "Allāh is in every place," and Shaykh 'Abd al-'Azīz's statement, "Because Allāh is above His Throne, above all His creatures"?

What refutes the latter is that there is no explicit proof-text denoting aboveness (*fawqiyya*) for Allāh Most High. What was transmitted was {*over the Throne*} (20:5). Then what is his proof? And who are his predecessors among the early authorities in saying such a statement? Moreover, the phrase "above His creatures" reeks of the attribution of place to Allāh Most High. Exalted is He beyond the attributes of creatures! [...]. 'Uthmān ibn Sa'īd al-Dārimī said:

As for your [al-Marrīsī's] statement that He is "not separate (*bā'in*) with any segregation nor gap between Him and His creation," you have lied in your statement and went astray from the right way. Rather, He is separate from His creation and above His Throne with a huge gap (*bi-furjatin kabīra*) and the seven heavens are between Him and His creatures on the earth.<sup>224</sup>

The Ulema have said that the expressions "with His Essence" (*bi-dhātih*) and "separate from His creation" (*bā'in min khalqih*) were not transmitted to describe Allāh Most High in any verse nor ḥadīth whatsoever, nor did any Companion ever say them.

<sup>223</sup> *Jarīdat 'Akkāz* (27 Dhūl-Ḥijja 1412). [A] Sulaymān ibn 'Abd Allāh ibn Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb (d. 1817 CE), the grandson of the founder of the Wahhābī sect, said, "Whoever believes or says that Allāh is in person (*bi-dhātih*) in every place, or in one place: he is a disbeliever." *Al-Tawḍīḥ 'an Tawḥīd al-Khallāq fī Jawāb Ahl al-'Irāq* (1319/1901, p. 34, and new ed. al-Riyadh: Dār Ṭayba, 1984). [T]

<sup>224</sup> *Al-Naqd* (p. 79). [A]

Rather, these two expressions were invented by one or more persons in the course of refuting their opponents.<sup>225</sup> The Imāms said this, including al-Kawtharī. So did Naṣir al-Albānī in the abridgment of al-Dhahabī's 'Uluw. Those that used those expressions have said what no one said before about Allāh and have gone astray with good intentions but evil expressions.

Al-Dhahabī in the biographical notice on "the ḥadīth Master and Proof in the Religion (Ḥujja)" Abū Naṣr al-Sijzī cites the latter's words in his book *al-Ibāna*:

Our Imāms such as Sufyān al-Thawrī, Mālik, Ḥammād ibn Salama, Ḥammād ibn Zayd, Sufyān ibn 'Uyayna, al-Fuḍayl [ibn 'Iyād], Ibn al-Mubārak, Aḥmad, and Ishāq [ibn Rāhūyah] are in agreement that Allāh Almighty is in person (*bi-dhātihī*)

<sup>225</sup> Such as Ibn al-Mubārak as narrated from 'Alī ibn al-Ḥasan ibn Shaqīq by al-Bayhaqī cf. note 415. In contrast, [1] Abū Nu'aym (1997 ed. 1:114 §227) narrates with his chain from 'Alī, in the chapter on 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, the latter's saying to the forty Jews who asked him about the nature and description of Allāh: "How can even the most eloquent tongues describe Him Who did not exist among things so that He could be said to be 'separate from them' (*bā'in*)? Rather, He is described without modality, and He is {*nearer to [man] than his jugular vein*} (50:16)." [2] Ibn Mahdī al-Ṭabarī said, as cited by al-Bayhaqī, *op. cit.* (Kawtharī ed. p. 410-411=Ḥāshidī ed. 2:308-309): "The Pre-Eternal One (*al-Qadīm*) is thus elevated over His Throne but neither sitting on (*qā'id*) nor standing on (*qā'im*) nor in contact with (*mumāss*) nor separate from (*mubāyin*) the Throne – meaning separate in His Essence in the sense of physical separation or distance. For 'contact' and its opposite 'separation,' 'standing' and its opposite 'sitting' are all the characteristics of bodies (*ajsām*), whereas {*Allāh is One, Everlasting, neither begetting nor begotten, and there is none like Him*} (112:1-4). What is allowed for bodies is impermissible for Him." This shows with remarkable clarity that those who made it a categorical imperative to declare that "Allāh is separate from creation" such as Ibn Khuzayma [as narrated by al-Harawī in *Dhamm al-Kalām* (4:377 §1245) and al-Dhahabī in his 'Uluw (p. 500) cf. *Mukhtaṣar al-'Uluw* (p. 225)] or Sulaymān ibn 'Abd Allāh ibn Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb (cf. note 223) went to excess although their intention is ostensibly to preclude notions of indwelling. Al-Ḥimyarī said in *Taṣḥīḥ al-Mafāhim al-'Aqdiyya* (p. 52): "The few expressions used by the Sunni Ulema to describe Allāh ﷻ but which did not come to us [in the Qur'ān and Sunna] as such, are not actually Attributes of the Essence but only a commentary (*tafsīr*) for those Divinely ordained Attributes." Allāh knows best. [T]

above the Throne, His knowledge is in every place, He descends to the nearest heaven, He gets angry and pleased, and He speaks to say whatever He wishes.

Al-Dhahabī comments: "What he narrated from them is well-known except the expression 'in person,' which is from his own bag. He attributed it to them in meaning [as opposed to literally] so that it will differentiate between the Throne and all other places."<sup>226</sup>

3. The *Tābi'ī* Imām Abū Ḥanīfa said – Allāh have mercy on him:

No one should utter, concerning Allāh Most High, anything of his own. Rather, one should describe Him only how He described Himself. One should not say anything about Allāh of his own mind. Allāh be blessed, the Lord of the worlds!<sup>227</sup>

As for Ibn Khuzayma who gathered the verses of the Attributes, each Attribute in a separate chapter – no one of the Predecessors preceded him in this – he piled up in his book, *al-Tawḥīd*, inauthentic and unspeakable ḥadīths, then said:

Whoever does not definitely confirm that Allāh is established over His Throne above His seven heavens, separate (*bā'in*) from His creation, he is a disbeliever who must be summoned to repent, otherwise his head is cut off and he must be dumped on a garbage heap so that his stench will not disturb Muslims and non-Muslim citizens.<sup>228</sup>

<sup>226</sup> *Al-'Uluw* (p. 180). See how al-Dhahabī describes him as "the ḥadīth Master and Proof in the Religion" and wonder! [A] Cf. al-Dhahabī, *Mukhtaṣar al-'Uluw* (p. 266-267 §243). [T]

<sup>227</sup> Ibn Ṣā'id, *al-I' tiqād*. [A]

<sup>228</sup> Narrated by al-Harawī in *Dhamm al-Kalām* (4:377 §1245) and al-Dhahabī in his *'Uluw* (p. 500) cf. *Mukhtaṣar al-'Uluw* (p. 225-226) with a sound chain from al-Ḥākim, from Muḥammad ibn Ṣāliḥ ibn Ḥānī, from Ibn Khuzayma. Ḥasan al-Saqqāf pompously

See al-Dhahabī's 'Uluw<sup>229</sup> – without the least comment nor condemnation, although al-Dhahabī did determine that the expressions “with His Essence” (*bi-dhātih*) and “separate” (*bā'in*) were never transmitted anywhere in the Book nor the Sunna, nor did any Companion nor Successor ever utter them! It is astonishing that someone who does not believe in that innovation which suggests likeness between Allāh and His creatures should be guilty of apostasy and not be washed nor shrouded nor prayed upon, nor even buried, but thrown into a garbage dump. Wonder of wonders, when real harm is caused only if one is left in such fashion, not when he is buried!

Abū Ismā'īl al-Harawī the author of *Manāzil al-Sā'irīn* who suggested union with the Divine – our refuge is in Allāh! – said:

I heard Yaḥyā ibn 'Ammār the admonisher reply, when I asked him about Ibn Ḥibbān, “We expelled him from Sijistān. He was very learned but had little religion. He came to us denying Allāh had a limit, so we expelled him!”

The ḥadīth Master al-Dhahabī commented:

Your condemnation of him is an innovation and delving into this topic is among the things for which Allāh Most High gave no permission. Nor was any text transmitted to that effect whether for or against, and part of the excellence of one's Islām is to leave what does not concern him. Exalted is

claimed, “Muḥammad ibn Šāliḥ ibn Hānī' is of unknown status for us (*majhūl 'indanā*) so this chain is unestablished” but al-Ḥākim himself declared him “trustworthy and trusted” *thiqa ma'mūn* cf. Ibn Ḥajar, *Lisān* (5:239) while Ibn Kathīr in his *Bidāya* (11:225) said *thiqa zāhid*. See also Ibn al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfi'iyya al-Kubrā* (3:174) and al-Ghazzālī's condemnation of the compilation of the names of all the Divine Attributes in one place in *Iljām al-'Awāmm* (p. 239-240). [T]

<sup>229</sup> *Al-'Uluw* (p. 152) and *Siyar A'lām al-Nubalā'* (16:97-98). [A]

Allāh beyond being ascribed a limit or being described except in the way He described Himself or taught His Messengers, according to the meaning He wants, without similitude nor modality – {*There is nothing whatsoever like Him, and He is the All-Hearing, the All-Seeing*} (42:11)!<sup>230</sup>

The ḥadīth Master Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn ibn Khalīl Kīkaldī al-‘Alā’ī said, “Wonder of wonders! By Allāh! Who is more deserving of being expelled and declared a Godless innovator?”<sup>231</sup> [...].

4. Imām al-Ṭaḥāwī said in *Bayān al-Sunnati wal-Jamā‘a*:

Exalted is Allāh beyond having limits (*ḥudūd*) placed on Him, or having boundaries (*ghāyāt*), or having parts (*arkān*), limbs (*a‘dā*) or organs (*adawāt*), nor is He contained by the six directions (*jihāt*) as all created things are.

The meaning of limit (*al-ḥadd*) is the end (*nihāya*) of something and masses or bodies (*al-ajrām*) all have limits. The Throne is not an infinitely stretching mass. Similarly, the Footstool, Paradise, Hellfire, the heavens and the earths all have surfaces. However, we human beings do not know what the surface of the Throne is, nor that of the Footstool, nor that of the seven heavens, nor that of Paradise, nor that of Gehenna. Nor does the preclusion of limit for Allāh Most High mean that He is infinitely extended, so let one beware of such an illusion! “Boundaries” signifies where something ends. “Parts” means sides, of which Allāh Most High is exempt because whatever possesses parts is necessarily

<sup>230</sup> *Siyar A‘lām al-Nubalā’* (Risāla ed. 16:97) cf. notes 209 and 422.[T]

<sup>231</sup> Ibn al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfi‘iyya al-Kubrā* (2:141-142). [A] Also narrated in al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-Ḥuffāz* (3:921), *Siyar* (Risāla ed. 16:96), and *Mizān* (6:99); Ibn al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfi‘iyya al-Kubrā* (Hijr ed. 3:132-133) cf. his stand-alone *Qā’ida fil-Jarḥ wal-Ta‘dīl* (p. 31-33) [in *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfi‘iyya al-Kubrā* (3:13)]; and Ibn Ḥajar, *Lisān* (5:113). [T]

limited. "Limbs" means that He is exalted beyond possessing any limb since a human being and everything endowed with a soul possesses limbs. "Organs" are small body parts such as the tongue and teeth. Some explained the "organs" to mean the instruments which human beings use as aids in accomplishing their acts, such as building and carpentry tools. This is because it can be gathered from the discourse of the People of Truth that Allāh Most High does whatever He wishes "without process" (*'ilāj*). What they mean by the latter expression is that He does not need the application of movements, pauses, and implements, but rather creates whatever He wishes without any of that. Whoever He wished, in pre-eternity, to bring into existence, He does so and fashions him with His pre-existent power. "The six directions" means that the six directions do not encompass Allāh Most High in the way they encompass all creatures, because the latter necessarily fall within dimensionality (*tahayyuz*) in one of the directions and whatever has a beginning must necessarily exist in a place.<sup>232</sup>

The erudite Proof of the Religion, Imām al-Kawtharī – Allāh have mercy on him – said:

The word "direction" (*al-jiha*) was never mentioned in any ḥadīth whatsoever. Even the Ḥanbalī Abū Ya'la said in *al-Mu'tamad fil-Mu'taqad*: "Limit is impermissible for Him – Exalted is He! – as well as boundaries, 'before,' 'after,' 'under,' 'in front of,' 'behind,' because these are attributes which the Law never transmitted and they are attributes that necessitate place."<sup>233</sup>

<sup>232</sup> See *Izhār al-'Aqīdat al-Sunniyya Sharḥ al-'Aqīdat al-Taḥāwiyya* (p. 129-130). [A]

<sup>233</sup> *Maqālāt al-Kawtharī* (p. 102). [A]



[Maḥmūd Muḥammad Khaṭṭāb al-Subkī said:]

Whoever attributes direction to Allāh Most High is heedless of the “judicative” (*muḥkam*) verse that states {*There is nothing whatsoever like Him*} (42:11) and turns a blind eye to transcendence (*tanzīh*) which is the core of Muslim belief and which stipulates that Allāh Most High existed before the universe was fashioned and before its ensuing directions existed – therefore these directions were created simultaneously with the creation of the universe.<sup>234</sup>

‘Alī was asked – Allāh be well-pleased with him – “Where was Allāh before He created the heavens and the earth?” He replied, “‘Where’ is a question about place and Allāh existed when there was no place and He is today as He ever was.”<sup>235</sup>

Imām al-Qurṭubī said in his commentary on the saying of Allāh Most High, {*Have you taken security from Him Who is in the heaven*} (67:16):

What is meant by the above-mentioned verse is the reverence and transcendence of Allāh Most High beyond [the

<sup>234</sup> See Ibn Jahbal’s text below (§ 24 p. 164). [T]

<sup>235</sup> *Ithāf al-Kā’ināt bi-Bayān Madhhab al-Salaf wal-Khalaf fil-Mutashābihāt wa-Radd Shubhat al-Mulhida wal-Mujassima wa-Mā ya’taqidūnahu min al-Muftarayāt* (p. 15) by the defender of the Sunna and slayer of *bid’a* Maḥmūd Muḥammad Khaṭṭāb al-Subkī. [A] This is cited from [1] ‘Alī ؑ by ‘Abd al-Qāhir al-Baghdādī in *al-Farq bayn al-Firaq* (p. 321=p.256); [2] Ibn Kullāb by al-Ash‘arī in *Maqālāt al-Islāmiyyin* (p. 298); [3] al-Māturīdī in *al-Tawḥīd* (p. 69, 75, 105-106); [4] al-Ash‘arī himself by Ibn ‘Asākir in the *Tabyīn* (Saqqā ed. p. 150); [5] Ibn Fūrak as per al-Qushayrī in his *Risāla* (beginning, “Doctrine of the Sufis”); [6] Ibn al-Bāqillānī in *al-Insāf* (p. 37) cf. also his *Tamhīd al-Awā’il* (p. 300); [7] al-Qushayrī himself in *al-Mi‘rāj* (p. 70); [8] Ibn al-Juwaynī in the entries devoted to him in *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfi‘iyya al-Kubrā, Tabyīn Kadhib al-Muḥtārī*, and *Siyar A‘lām al-Nubalā*; [9] Abū Ishāq al-Shīrāzī in *al-Ishāra ilā Madhhab Ahl al-Ḥaqq* (p. 236); [10] Ibn ‘Aṭā’ Allāh in his *Hikam* (§34); [11] Ibn ‘Abd al-Salām in *al-Mulḥa*; [12] Badr al-Dīn Ibn Jamā‘a in *Īdāḥ al-Dalīl* (p. 104); [13] Ibn Jahbal himself; etc. See also our article, “Allāh is Now as He Ever Was” in our *Sunna Notes*. [T]

descriptives of] lowliness and belowness (*al-sufl wal-taht*) and [the affirmation of] His description with loftiness and magnificence (*al-<sup>ʿ</sup>uluw wal-<sup>ʿ</sup>aẓama*) – not places nor directions nor limits, as these are the attributes of bodies and because He created places and is in no way in need of them. Rather, He exists from His pre-eternity before the creation of place and time, as there was no place nor time, and He is now as He ever was.<sup>236</sup>

Al-Kamāl ibn al-Humām said – Allāh have mercy upon him:

The seventh principle is that Allāh Most High is not in a specific direction because directions were created simultaneously with the creation of human beings and their like of two-legged creatures. For the meaning of “above” is the layer next to one’s head while the rest is below. As for four-legged creatures or those that crawl on their bellies, the meaning of “above” is the layer next to their backs. Even so, this is a relative matter because if an ant is walking on the ceiling then “above” in relation to it is the direction of the earth because that is the layer next to its back. If every single creature were round, none of those directions would exist. Allāh Most High existed from pre-eternity and there was nothing of all creation, therefore He exists without direction.<sup>237</sup>

<sup>236</sup> *Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī* (18:216). [A]

<sup>237</sup> *Al-Musāyara* (p. 29). [A]

﴿سُبْحٰنَ رَبِّكَ رَبِّ الْعِزَّةِ عَمَّا يَصِفُوْنَ﴾

*{Glorified be thy Lord, the Lord of Majesty,  
from that which they attribute unto Him!}*

(37:180)



IBN JAHBAL AL-KILĀBĪ

The Refutation of Him [Ibn Taymiyya]  
Who Attributes Direction to Allāh ﷻ

*AL-RADDU 'ALĀ MAN QĀLA BIL-JIHA*

Numbers in square brackets refer to the pages in the edition of Ibn Jahbal's Arabic text in *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfi' iyya al-Kubrā*.

Paragraph Numbers in the outer margins have been added for cross-referencing purposes.

Section titles were added for clarity.

## إسناد هذا الكتاب

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

الحمد لله والصلاة والسلام على رسول الله وآله وصحبه ومن والاه

﴿ سبحانك اللهم لا علم لنا إلا ما علمتنا إنك أنت العليم الحكيم ﴾

قال (اللا شيء) جبريل بن فؤاد الصالحي الشافعي: أروي هذه الرسالة الجليلة ضمن روايتي المسلسلة بالسادة الشافعية الدمشقيين لكتاب طبقات الشافعية الكبرى إجازة عن الشيخ المسند أبي الجود محمد تيسير بن توفيق المخزومي (ولد ١٣٣١)، عن شيخ القراء العلامة محمد سليم بن أحمد الحلواني (ت ١٣٦٣)، عن العلامة شيخ الشام سليم العطار (ت ١٣٠٧)، قال: أخبرنا محدث الشام عبد الرحمن الكزبري الحفيد، عن الحافظ الزبيدي والسيد أحمد العطار ومحمد الكزبري الشهير بالأوسط، جميعهم عن الشهاب المنيني، زاد الكزبري الأوسط: ووالدي - أي عبد الرحمن الجد - كلاهما عن أبي المواهب محمد بن عبد الباقي الحنبلي، عن أيوب الخلوقي العَدَوِي، عن المعمر إبراهيم الأحذب، عن الشهاب ابن حجر الهيثمي، عن السيوطي، عن قاضي القضاة عز الدين أحمد بن إبراهيم

الحنبلي والجلال أبي الفضل عبد الرحمن بن أحمد القُمُصي، كلاهما عن الجهم  
عبد الله بن علي بن محمد الكِناني، عن مؤلف الكتاب - كما في (فَهْرَس  
الفهارس) للكِناني و(أسانيد الهيثمي) للفاداني.

وهو الحافظ، قاضي القضاة، شيخ الإسلام، تاج الدين عبد الوهاب بن  
الإمام، حافظ عصره، قاضي القضاة، شيخ الإسلام، تقي الدين علي بن عبد  
الكافي السبكي الخزرجي الأنصاري، المعروف بابن السبكي، قال في كتابه  
طبقات الشافعية الكبرى في ترجمته للإمام ابن جهبل الكِلابي: «وقفتُ له على  
تصنيف صنّفه في نفي الجهة ردّاً على ابن تيمية لا بأس به وهو هذا.» ثم ساق  
المتن بكامله. رحمهم الله تعالى ونفعنا بهم، آمين.



CHAIN OF TRANSMISSION  
FOR THIS BOOK

By the grace of Allāh I narrate this treatise as part of my all-Damascene Shāfi‘ī-chained narration of *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfi‘īyya al-Kubrā* by permission from the specialist of transmission Shaykh Abū al-Jūd Muḥammad Taysīr ibn Tawfiq al-Makhzūmī (b. 1331), from the foremost master of canonical readings Shaykh Muḥammad Salīm ibn Aḥmad al-Ḥalwānī (d. 1363), from the Shaykh of Shām Salīm al-‘Aṭṭār (d. 1307) who said: The Ḥadīth Scholar of Shām ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Kuzbarī al-Dimashqī the Grandson reported to us: from the *Ḥāfiẓ* Sayyid Murtaḍā al-Zabīdī, Sayyid Aḥmad al-‘Aṭṭār, and Muḥammad al-Kuzbarī the Middle, all three from al-Shihāb al-Manīnī, al-Kuzbarī adding: and from my father, *i.e.* ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Kuzbarī the Grandfather, both of them from Abū al-Mawāhib Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Bāqī al-Ḥanbalī, from Ayyūb al-Khalwatī al-‘Adawī, from the aged Ibrāhīm al-Aḥḍab, from al-Shihāb Ibn Ḥajar al-Haytamī, from al-Suyūṭī, from Qāḍī al-Qudāt ‘Izz al-Dīn Aḥmad ibn Ibrāhīm al-Ḥanbalī and al-Jalāl al-Qumuṣī, both of them from al-Jamāl ‘Abd Allāh ibn ‘Alī ibn Muḥammad al-Kinānī, from the author of the book, all of the above per al-Kattānī’s *Fahras al-Fahāris* and al-Fādānī’s *Asānīd al-Haytamī*.

The author of the book is the *Ḥāfiẓ*, Shaykh al-Islām Taj al-Dīn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb ibn al-Imām *Ḥāfiẓ* ‘Aṣriḥ Shaykh al-Islām Taqī al-Dīn ‘Alī ibn ‘Abd al-Kāfi al-Subkī al-Khazrajī al-Anṣārī known as Ibn al-Subkī, who said in his book *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfi‘iyya al-Kubrā* in the biographical notice on Imām Ibn Jahbal al-Kilābī: “I saw a work he authored against the attribution of direction to Allāh, in refutation of Ibn Taymiyya, and it is not bad. Here it is.” Then he cited the text in full. Allāh have mercy on them and benefit us with them. *Āmīn*.

## AUTHOR'S INTRODUCTION

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[Ibn al-Subkī's narration of Ibn Jahbal's text  
in *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfi' iyya al-Kubrā* (9:35)<sup>238</sup>]

**I**n the Name of Allāh, All-Beneficent, Most Merciful.  
All Praise to Allāh Almighty, the sovereign Lord of Power and Dominion, the Self-Sufficient Who stands in need of nothing, and in need of Whom stand all things. Nothing that exists depends on anything other than Him alone. He sent forth Muḥammad ﷺ with the pristine path and the resplendent Faith, whereupon he produced the clearest proofs and illumined the path of wayfarers. He described his Lord with the Attributes of majesty and negated from Him all that does not befit magnificence and perfection. Exalted is Allāh Most Great and Most High far beyond the claims of the transgressors! The Throne does not carry Him – nay, both the Throne and Throne-bearers are themselves carried by the subtlety of His Power and subdued in His Grip.<sup>239</sup> He encompasses all things with His knowledge.

<sup>238</sup> From the text cited in full by Ibn al-Subkī in Ibn Jahbal's entry in the 1992 Dār Hijr edition of the *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfi' iyya al-Kubrā* (9:35-91). I did not see Ṭa Ha al-Dusūqī Ḥubayshī's *al-Haqā'iq al-Jaliyya fil-Radd 'alā Ibn Taymiyya fī-Mā Awwadahu fil-Fatwā al-Ḥamawiyya li-Ibni Jahbal*, which contains another edition of the treatise.

<sup>239</sup> This entire sentence is a quotation from al-Ash'arī's *Ibāna* (Maḥmūd ed. 2:21 = Ṣabbāgh ed. p. 35) cf. note 371.

He well knows the number of all things in creation and is aware of the deep recesses of consciences and the movements of innermost thoughts. Glory to Him! How great is the matter upon which He stands, how tremendous is His Dominion! {*All that are in the heavens and the earth entreat Him*} because of their need for Him; {*every day He exercises universal power*} (55:29) for He is omnipotent. Blessings and peace upon our master Muḥammad, the Seal of His Prophets and Bearer of His News, and upon his Family and Companions!

- 2 The reason for undertaking this small work is that recently someone produced something in which he asserted direction (*jihad*) for Allāh ﷻ.<sup>240</sup> He deceived with that work those who have no firm foothold in learning, no mastery of knowledge, no share of understanding, and no ability to see with the light of wisdom. Therefore, I decided to speak about the doctrine of *Ahl al-Sunna wal-Jamā'a* and show the corrupt nature of what he said, although he himself contradicts every single claim he makes and spontaneously destroys every single foundation he lays. [36] Then I produce proofs from the doctrine of *Ahl al-Sunna wal-Jamā'a* and what pertains thereto.
- 3 Before turning to the above, I begin with an explanatory introduction on the subject at hand.

<sup>240</sup> Ibn Taymiyya and his *Fatwā Hamawiyya* remain unnamed throughout the entire text.

## The Ḥashwiyya or Vulgar Anthropomorphists

The doctrine of the Ḥashwiyya that consists in asserting a direction for Allāh ﷻ is a corrupt and unacceptable doctrine. 4  
The falsehood of this doctrine is obvious if one only tries to imagine it. Consequently the Imāms have said that, were it not for the seduction of the uneducated public by the Ḥashwiyya, they would not have thought to address the latter [heresy] nor used a single drop of ink to refute them.

The Ḥashwiyya are of two types.<sup>241</sup> The first make no pretense 5  
of hiding their gross anthropomorphism; {*And they fancy that they have some standing – Lo! is it not they who are the liars?*} (58:18). The second type cloak themselves in the school of the *Salaf*, hoping thereby to gain something from ill-gotten property – if only scraps – to take with them. For this vain purpose they marshalled the common people and the ignorant, the rabble and the ruffian. For they know well that Iblīs toils for nothing other than the defeat of the Community of Muḥammad ﷺ. Hence, the hearts of the common people do not concur on other than innovation and misguidance, by which Iblīs destroys the Religion and corrupts the certitude of faith. History shows that Iblīs – Allāh curse him! – was unable to marshal other than the likes of

<sup>241</sup> The author built on Imām Ibn ‘Abd al-Salām’s prefatory words in *al-Mulḥa fi l’-tiqād Ahl al-Haqq*, a refutation of the anthropomorphist Ḥanbalis of Syria in his time. See our full published translation entitled *The Belief of the People of Truth*.

the Khawārij, or the Rāfiḍa,<sup>242</sup> or the atheists, or the Qarāmiṭa.<sup>243</sup> As for *Ahl al-Sunna wal-Jamā'a*, they never concurred on other than the manifest Book of Allāh and His strong Rope.

- 6 Among the second type of the Ḥashwiyya are those who lie about the First and Foremost among the Emigrants and Helpers ﷺ.<sup>244</sup> They claim that the latter say the same as what they, the Ḥashwiyya, say. But even if they spent the earth's weight in gold, they would never be able to pass off one word as having been said by the Companions to justify their claims! This group cloaked themselves with the *Salaf* to preserve their reputation of leadership and retain the scraps they have fetched for themselves. {[*They*] *desire that they should have security from you, and security from their own folk*} (4:91). Their kind clothe themselves with self-display and over-ascetic manners. Dung they deem gilded with silver, and latrines as white palaces. They make others renounce pearls in order to procure mustard-seeds.

*They make a show of piety before people  
While going around looking for cash.*<sup>245</sup>

- 7 The school of the *Salaf* is none other than the assertion of Divine Oneness and Transcendence as opposed to asserting a body or likeness for Allāh ﷻ. The innovators claim that they follow the school of the *Salaf*, [37]

*Each one proclaiming his kinship to Layla  
But Layla does not confirm it for any of them.*<sup>246</sup>

<sup>242</sup> The Shi'is who insult the Companions.

<sup>243</sup> A sect of frank anthropomorphists.

<sup>244</sup> See §§39, 110, 130 (p. 173, 207, 213) etc. The expression "the First and Foremost" denotes those who prayed towards both *qiblas* cf. Ibn Qutayba, *Ma'arif* (p. 318).

<sup>245</sup> Mahmūd al-Warrāq (d. ~230) cf. *al-'Iqd al-Farid* (3:216) and *al-Kashkūl* (2:216).

<sup>246</sup> *Dīwān al-Ṣabāba* 3.

For how can anyone believe that the *Salaf* subscribe to *tashbīh*, or even sat quietly when the innovators appeared? [How could they do this] after Allāh ﷻ said: {*Confound not truth with falsehood, nor knowingly conceal the truth*} (2:42); and {(Remember) when Allāh laid a charge on those who had received the scripture: You are to expound it to mankind and not hide it} (3:187); and {That you may explain to mankind what has been revealed for them} (16:44)? 8

The Companions ﷺ did not probe any of these things because they knew that the welfare of the masses of the people was the most important thing. Yet the swords of their proofs were honed and their spears well-whetted. When the Seceders (Khawārij) emerged, the two erudite doctors of the Community and cousins of the Prophet ﷺ pounced on them – ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib and ‘Abd Allāh ibn ‘Abbās ؓ! As a result of the debate that ensued, some of the Khawārij were persuaded by the truth, while the rest remained obdurate and the sword fell on their heads. 9

*The law of the sword must be carried out on you.  
We shall be pleased only when the sword is pleased!*

Similarly, when the heresy of absolute free will (Qadariyya) emerged in the person of Ma‘bad al-Juhanī,<sup>247</sup> Allāh ﷻ dispatched for him the ascetic of the Community, [38] the son of him who distinguished truth from falsehood – ‘Abd Allāh ibn ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb ؓ. 10

<sup>247</sup> Ma‘bad ibn ‘Abd Allāh ibn ‘Uwaymir al-Juhanī al-Baṣrī (d. 80) is one of the Successors, considered by some of the Imāms of ḥadīth to be “truthful in himself” (*ṣadīq fī nafsih*) although an innovator. Ibn Mājah narrates through him the ḥadīth of the Prophet ﷺ: “Do not indulge in mutual praise for it is nothing short of butchery.” [Narrated from Mu‘āwiya with a fair (*ḥasan*) chain as stated by al-Sindī.] He was the first to speak of absolute free will in the time of the Companions, a doctrine that became the mainstay of the Qadariyya and was adopted by the Mu‘tazila. Al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī forbade people from sitting with him and called him “astray and leading others astray” (*ḍāll muḍill*). He was killed by al-Ḥajjāj. *Mizān* (4:141); *Siyar* (5:192-194 §443).

- 11 If these two innovations had not emerged, the Companions would never have spoken out to refute the latter or repress the former. Their habit was but to exhort people to Godwariness and good deeds. That is why there is no report that the Prophet ﷺ – nor the Companions – ever gathered people together<sup>248</sup> and then ordered them to believe such and such about Allāh Almighty, although this kind of meeting took place for many other matters. He only touched upon it in a way which the elect understood and which the common people did not disavow.
- 12 And I swear by Allāh ﷻ upon my conscience, not only once but a million times, that the master of Prophets ﷺ never said: “O people, believe that Allāh is in the upward direction”! Nor did the Rightly-Guided Caliphs say that, nor any of the Companions.<sup>249</sup> Rather, they left people alone after ordering them in the matters of worship and legal rulings. When the innovations appeared, the *Salaf* subdued them. As for inquisition into people’s beliefs and activism for the sake of exposing these beliefs and enacting reprisals on their basis – this they never did.<sup>250</sup> They only put an end to innovations upon their appearance.
- 13 The Ḥashwiyya, whenever they engage their opponents on matters of the foundations of belief, use rational arguments and bring up transmitted proofs in their own way. However, when they come to questions of gross anthropomorphism, they become stupefied and distressed. You realize at that time that they

<sup>248</sup> Ibn Taymiyya had gathered people together and given the *fatwā* on direction from the pulpit.

<sup>249</sup> A reference to Ibn Taymiyya’s claim that such a belief is not an innovation, which the author refutes in the present work.

<sup>250</sup> A reference to the habit of Ḥanbalī anthropomorphists and their modern epigones of charging the Sunni Scholars with wrong beliefs as took place with al-Junayd, al-Bukhārī, Ibn Ḥibbān, Ibn Fūrak, Abū Naṣr al-Qushayrī, Ibn ‘Abd al-Salām and, in our time, al-Nawawī, Ibn Ḥajar, and Abū Ḥanīfa!



understand neither Arabic nor other than Arabic.<sup>251</sup> By Allāh, they do not! By Allāh, if they understood, they would have surely fallen in love [with the truth] (*law fahimū lahāmū*). Instead, they embarked on the sea of their vain passions and went sailing on it. They indoctrinated every feeble-minded simpleton they found. In so doing they contravened the way of the *Salaf*, who refrained from broaching such topics with the common people.

Whenever al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī ؓ spoke on the science of *tawḥīd*, he would begin by taking out of his gathering all those that were not fit to hear. May Allāh have mercy on the *Salaf*! They did not speak about doctrine except with the *Ahl al-Sunna* among them – for the Sunna is the basis of the verifying authorities – and they withheld any such discourse from newcomers. They said: Newcomers [39] see things for the first time and are barely starting on their way; they have no prior experience and no firm foothold in these matters – even if they are seventy years old.

Sahl [al-Tustarī] ؓ said: “Do not acquaint newcomers with the secrets before they become firmly settled in their belief that God is One and that the object of monotheism is Unique, Everlasting, and transcends modality and place. Thoughts cannot encompass Him nor can hearts conceive of Him in terms of ‘how’.”<sup>252</sup>

In addition, this sect [the Ḥashwiyya] does not rest from testing people’s belief until they assert direction for Allāh ؓ. It is as if they never heard of the sound ḥadīth of Prophet ﷺ: “I was ordered to fight people until they say *lā ilāha illallāh*.”<sup>253</sup> Are they

<sup>251</sup> Hence the superiority of Sunni debators trained in language and logic over Wahhābīs the world over, especially in non-Arab lands where those sciences are stronger such as in South and Southeast Asia.

<sup>252</sup> On the foremost Imām of the *Tābi’īn* al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (d. 110) and the early Sufi master al-Tustarī (d. 283) see our *Four Imāms and Their Schools*.

<sup>253</sup> A mass-narrated (*mutawātir*) ḥadīth of the Prophet ﷺ narrated by al-Bukhārī, Muslim, and others from nineteen Companions as stated by al-Kattāni in *Naẓm al-Mutanāthir*.

not satisfied with what satisfied their Prophet ﷺ?<sup>254</sup> No, they want to order even the handicapped to plunge into a sea without shores, and to search for something for which the Prophet ﷺ never ordered them to search, nor any of his Companions. Nor do they content themselves with what is less, namely, the report from their own Imām, Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal ؒ who said:

<Allāh is not to be described other than in the terms with which He has described Himself, or in which the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ has described Him. We do not exceed the Qur’ān and the ḥadīth.> We know that the terms with which Allāh was described in these two sources are the truth, free of nonsense and mystery (*lughz*). The meaning of these terms is known from the way that the speaker’s intent is known from his words. Together with this, {*There is nothing whatsoever like Him*} (42:11) – whether in His sanctified Self which is mentioned in His Names and Attributes, or in His acts. It is necessary that Allāh possesses an Essence in the real and literal sense (*lahu dhātun ḥaqīqiyyatun*), He possesses acts in the real and literal sense and He possesses Attributes in the real and literal sense.<sup>255</sup> Yet {*There is nothing whatsoever like Him*} whether in His Essence, His Attributes, or His acts. Whatever entails imperfection (*naqṣ*) or the quality of contingency (*ḥudūth*), Allāh transcends it in the real sense. He rightly

<sup>254</sup> The Prophet ﷺ heard a call [to prayer] coming from a valley saying: “I bear witness that there is no God but Allāh and that Muḥammad is the Messenger of Allāh” whereupon he said: “And I bear witness to the same, and I bear witness that no one bears witness to the same except he clears himself of *shirk* (associating a partner to Allāh).” Aḥmad and al-Ṭabarānī in *al-Awsaṭ* relate it with a sound chain, as stated by al-Haythamī (1:59).

<sup>255</sup> *Aqāwīl al-Thiqāt* has: “Just as it is known with certitude that Allāh possesses an Essence in the real and literal sense and possesses acts in the real and literal sense, similarly He possesses Attributes in the real and literal sense. Yet {*There is nothing whatsoever like Him*}, etc.”

owns perfection above which there is no limit. And contingency is precluded from Him. [40] For nonexistence is precluded from Him, while contingency presupposes nonexistence as its prior attribute. Moreover, the contingent depends upon a Creator, whereas He necessarily exists in Himself.<sup>256</sup>

These are the words of their Imām. Would that they contented themselves with them! He has mentioned in this text the largest meanings with the most succinct expressions, brought up the proofs of the *mutakallimūn* against this heretic (*māriq*) [Ibn Taymiyya] in the best and clearest terms, and never ordered what that sect [the Ḥashwiyya] orders.<sup>257</sup> 17

<sup>256</sup> *Ḥamawiyya* (p. 271-272) = *Majmū' al-Fatāwā* (5:26-27) cf. al-Karmī, *Aqāwīl al-Thiqāt* (p. 234) and Ibn Qudāma in *Lam'at al-I'tiqād* (Ryadh ed. p. 9) and his *Tahrim al-Nazar fi Kutub al-Kalām* (p. 38), all citing Imam Aḥmad but only the bracketed segment is verbatim from him while the rest is Ibn Taymiyya's very free paraphrase, which the author quoted.

<sup>257</sup> Ibn Jahbal made a mistake as the above words are actually those of Ibn Taymiyya except for the bracketed first two phrases, even if their contents are actually a loose paraphrase of Ibn Qudāma's reports from Imām Aḥmad in *Lam'at al-I'tiqād* and *Tahrim al-Nazar* and al-Karmī's in *Aqāwīl al-Thiqāt*.

Mālik and al-Shāfi‘ī’s  
Understanding of *Tawḥīd*

18 Al-Shāfi‘ī ﷺ said:

I asked Mālik about *tawḥīd* and he said: “It is absurd to think that the Prophet ﷺ taught his Community hygiene but did not teach them *tawḥīd*. He said: ‘I was ordered to fight people until they say *lā ilāha illallāh*.’”<sup>258</sup>

Mālik ﷺ showed thereby that what is required of people in *tawḥīd* is the meaning illustrated by this hadīth. He never said that part of *tawḥīd* is to believe that Allāh is in the upward direction.<sup>259</sup>

<sup>258</sup> Narrated from al-Muzanī by al-Sulamī cf. *Siyar* (Risāla ed. 10:26). See note 253 on the hadīth. Similarly, Abū Ḥanīfa ﷺ said in the *Fiqh al-Akbar*: “The root of the affirmation of Divine unity and sound conviction is to say, ‘I believe in Allāh, His angels, His Books, His Messengers, resurrection after death, the foreordainment of good and evil by Allāh Most High, the Reckoning, the Balance, paradise and hell, and that all these are real.’” And in the *Waṣīyya*: “The believer is truly a believer and the unbeliever is truly an unbeliever. [...] People are in three classes: the believer sincere in his faith; the unbeliever upholding his unbelief; and the hypocrite dissembling his hypocrisy.”

<sup>259</sup> Similarly, Aḥmad ﷺ said in one of the narrations of his ‘*Aqīda*: “The Believer from *Ahl al-Sunna wal-Jamā‘a* is someone who bears witness that there is no god but Allāh alone without partner whatsoever, and that Muḥammad is His servant and Messenger.” Ibn Abī Yā‘lā, *Ṭabaqāt al-Ḥanābila* (1:293).

Al-Shāfi‘ī<sup>260</sup> was asked about the Divine Attributes. He said:

19

It is forbidden for minds to represent Allāh.<sup>261</sup> It is forbidden for the imagination to conceive limits for Him. It is forbidden for speculation to presume anything about Him. It is forbidden for souls to think about His Essence. It is forbidden for consciences to deepen reflection about Him. It is forbidden for thoughts to grasp other than what He described Himself with,<sup>262</sup> as conveyed by His Prophet ﷺ.<sup>263</sup>

<sup>260</sup> Similarly, Aḥmad said: “Truly, we concede whatever those ḥadīths say even if we have no knowledge of their explanation (*fa-innā nusallim lahā wa-in lam na‘ lam tafsirahā*). We do not discuss them. We do not dispute about them. We do not explain them. Rather, we narrate them exactly the way they came to us, we believe in them, and we know that they are truth, just as the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ said.” Ibn Abī Ya‘lā, *op. cit.* (1:311).

<sup>261</sup> He also said: “I believe in what comes from Allāh in the meaning meant (*murād*) by Allāh and I believe in what comes from the Messenger of Allāh in the meaning meant by the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ.” Cited by Ibn Qudāma in *Lam‘at al-I‘tiqād* (Ryadh ed. p. 10 = Damascus ed. p. 9 = ‘Uthaymīn ed. p. 36) and *Dhamm al-Ta‘wīl* (1994 ed. p. 9 = 1981 ed. p. 11 and 1994 ed. p. 42 = 1986 ed. p. 44), al-Mawāhibī in *al-‘Ayn wal-Athar* (Damascus: al-Ma‘mūn ed.) p. 62, and Ibn Taymiyya in *al-Risāla al-Madaniyya* (p. 121), *al-‘Aqīda al-Aṣḥāniyya* (p. 86), and *Majmū‘ al-Fatāwā* (4:2 and 6:354).

<sup>262</sup> Similarly, Aḥmad said: “We believe and confirm the ḥadīths of the Attributes without ‘how’ and without meaning (*wa-lā kayf wa-lā ma‘nā*).” Narrated from Ḥanbal ibn Ishāq through al-Khallāl by Ibn Qudāma in *Dhamm al-Ta‘wīl* (p. 22) and *Lam‘at al-I‘tiqād* (p. 9) as well as Ibn Baṭṭa in *al-Ibāna* (3:58).

<sup>263</sup> Narrated from al-Rabī‘ ibn Sulaymān by Ibn Qudāma in *Dhamm al-Ta‘wīl* (p. 20-21 §34).

The Ash'arīs are Closer to the *Salaf*  
Than the Ḥashwiyya

20 Whoever investigates and searches carefully will find that the habit of the Companions, the Successors, and the early generations was to refrain from probing into these matters. They never mentioned them in gatherings, nor did they instill them into the general public, nor did they bring them up on the pulpits. They did not provoke misgivings in the hearts of people that would spread like wildfire. This is known of necessity from the accounts of their lives, and upon it we have built our doctrine and based our creed. If Allāh wills, our conformity with the *Salaf* will become apparent to the reader, as well as the straying of the objector from their path, even if he claims to follow them. In fact, he treads nothing other than the path of innovation.

21 [41] As for the claim that the *Salaf* did bring up these topics, and his rhetorical question that “the Prophet ﷺ taught everything – even relieving oneself – but did not teach this important matter?”: such a statement is a fake currency that does not pass muster with a trained money-changer. Does he not know that everyone needs to relieve himself, perhaps more than once a day? But what need do common people have to probe the Divine Attributes? All that they need to know about *tawḥīd* is made clear in the ḥadīth “I was ordered to fight people...”

Moreover, the above claim, by itself, destroys the claimant's edifice and brings down his foundations. For the Prophet ﷺ evidently taught about relieving oneself, but he did not teach people that Allāh Almighty was in the upward direction. As for what is narrated about the Throne and heaven concerning *istiwa'*, the claimant has devised his construction and propped up the branches of his claim with the thesis that the Throne and heaven both signify one thing – the upward direction. Therefore, what this claimant said, the Prophet ﷺ never taught, although he ﷺ taught even how to relieve oneself. According to him, it follows that the common people must be taught about the upward direction, which the Prophet ﷺ himself never taught!

22

As for us, we say that such a matter is not to be probed. One keeps silent about it just as the Prophet ﷺ and his Companions did. Whatever was sufficient for them is sufficient for us. Consequently, none of us is found ordering common people in any way to probe the Divine Attributes. But those people [the Ḥashwiyya] have made it their habit to enter into the subject and order others to do likewise. I wonder which of us are the closest to the *Salaf*?

23

We now turn to state the doctrine of *Ahl al-Sunna*.

## The Doctrine of *Ahl al-Sunna*

24 We say: Our doctrine is that Allāh ﷻ is pre-eternal and pre-existent (*qadīm azalī*). He does not resemble anything nor does anything resemble Him. He has no direction nor place. He is not subject to time nor duration. Neither “where” (*ayn*) nor “at” (*hayth*) applies to Him. He shall be seen, but not as part of a face-to-face encounter, nor in the sense of a face-to-face encounter (*yurā lā ‘an muqābala wa-lā ‘alā muqābala*).<sup>264</sup>

<sup>264</sup> Al-Qārī said in *Sharḥ al-Fiqh al-Akbar* (p. 180): “One must not pay any attention to what the innovators imagine on rational bases, and the commentator of al-Ṭaḥāwī’s ‘*Aqīda* [i.e. Ibn Abī al-‘Izz in *Sharḥ al-‘Aqīda al-Taḥāwīyya* (p. 195)] committed a mistake in this regard when he said: ‘Can any vision be rationally conceived without a face-to-face encounter? And in it there is a proof for His elevation (‘*uluw*) over His creatures.’ It seems that he applies the upward direction to his Lord, whereas the doctrine of *Ahl al-Sunna wal-Jamā‘a* is that He – exalted is He – is not seen in any direction. The Prophet’s saying: ‘You shall see your Lord just as you see the moon on the night it is full’ [Narrated from Abū Hurayra by al-Tirmidhī (*ḥasan gharīb*) and Abū Hanīfa in his *Musnad* and, in a slightly different wording, from Jarīr ibn ‘Abd Allāh al-Bajālī by al-Bukhārī and Muslim] is a simile (*tashbīh*) between two types of *sightings* generally speaking, not a simile between two objects of vision from all perspectives.” Ibn Abī al-‘Izz – purportedly a Ḥanafī – said in *Sharḥ al-‘Aqīda al-Taḥāwīyya* (p. 195): “Whoever claims that Allāh is seen without direction, let him verify his sanity!” Note the latter’s casual dismissal of – and deviation from – Imām al-Ṭaḥāwī’s position in the ‘*Aqīda* (§35: “The Seeing of Allāh by the People of the Garden is true, without their vision being all-encompassing and without the manner of their vision being known.” §38: “He is beyond having limits placed on Him, or being restricted, or having parts or limbs. Nor is He contained by the six directions as all created things are”) and Imām Abū Hanīfa’s position in *al-Waṣīyya* (p. 3-4): “The meeting (*liqā‘*) of Allāh ﷻ with the dwellers of Paradise is without modality nor simile nor direction” (*Liqā‘ Allāh ta‘ālā li-ahl al-janna bil-ru’yati al-baṣariyya bilā kayf wa-lā tashbīh wa-lā jiha*), cited by al-Qārī in *Sharḥ al-Fiqh al-Akbar* (p. 176-177).



He was when there was no place, He created place and time, and He is now as He ever was. This is the *madhhab* of *Ahl al-Sunna* and the doctrine of the shaykhs of the [Sufi] Path – may Allāh be well-pleased with them.<sup>265</sup> [42]

Al-Junayd ؒ said: “When does He Whom nothing and no one resembles nor compares to, ever join (*yattaṣilu*) with one whom something resembles and to whom something compares?”<sup>266</sup> 25

Yaḥyā ibn Mu‘ādh al-Rāzī ؒ was asked: “Tell us about Allāh Almighty.” He replied, “He is One God.” The questioner asked: “What is He like (*kayfa hū*)?” He replied: “The Owner Who is Mighty.” The questioner asked: “Where is He?” He said: {[*Lo! Your Lord is*] in the lookout} (89:14).<sup>267</sup> The questioner said: “I was not asking you about that.” Al-Rāzī replied: “All else is an attribute of the created. As for His own attribute [of where-about], I was not informed about it.”<sup>268</sup> 26

Imām al-Ḥaramayn said in *al-Irshād* (p. 167): “Among their [the Mu‘tazila’s] insinuations are claims that stem, in fact, from pure speculation, such as their saying: ‘one who sees must be facing opposite what he sees, or virtually facing.’ We say to them: Do you know for certain what you are claiming, or do you know it on speculative bases? If they claim that they know it for certain and accuse whoever disagrees with them of denial, their credibility collapses and their untruth becomes manifest. The same reasoning applies to the anthropomorphists [...]. And the Creator sees His creation without direction, therefore it is possible that He be seen without direction.”

<sup>265</sup> Cf. “Allāh is Now as He Ever Was” in our *Sunna Notes* series.

<sup>266</sup> Narrated by al-Qushayrī from al-Sulamī from Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Fārisī, from Ibrāhīm ibn Fātik, from al-Junayd. Al-Sulamī’s Shaykh (for about thirty reports in *Ṭabaqāt al-Ṣūfiyya*) Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Fārisī Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ibn Ibrāhīm is unknown. “Ibrāhīm ibn Fātik ibn Sa‘īd al-Baghdādī was al-Ḥallāj’s servant. He accompanied al-Nūrī and al-Junayd and the latter used to treat him with generosity.” In Ḥallāj, *Ṭawāsīn* (p. 206). Ibn Taymiyya cites it in his *Istiḳāma* (Madīna ed. 1:184) from al-Qushayrī without contesting its authenticity and approves it. Paragraphs §25-31 are from al-Qushayrī’s *Risāla* (p. 42-45).

<sup>267</sup> Also translated {*Verily, Your Lord is ready at ambush*}.

<sup>268</sup> Narrated by al-Qushayrī from al-Sulamī from Abū al-Faraj ‘Abd al-Wāḥid ibn Bakr al-Warṭhānī (d. 372) from Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn ‘Alī al-Bardā‘ī from Ṭāhīr ibn Ism‘īl al-Rāzī, from Yaḥyā. Abū Nu‘aym (1984 ed. 10:60) narrates it from Ibn Bakr with

- 27 Similarly, Ibn Shāhīn ؒ asked al-Junayd ؒ about the meaning of “being-with” (*maʿ*). He said: “Being-with has two meanings. The first is ‘with the Prophets in terms of aid and protection.’ Allāh ؒ said: {*I am with you twain, hearing and seeing*} (20:46). The second meaning is ‘with the world in terms of knowledge and awareness.’ Allāh ؒ said: {*He is with them wheresoever they may be*} (58:7).” Ibn Shāhīn said: “The likes of you point the Community toward Allāh.”<sup>269</sup>
- 28 Dhū al-Nūn ؒ was asked about the saying of Allāh: {*The Merciful established Himself over the Throne*} (20:5). He said: “He affirmed His Essence (*dhāt*) and negated His place. He is existent in His Essence, while all things are subjected to His wisdom just as He likes.”<sup>270</sup>

the same chain. Abū Zakariyyā Yahyā ibn Muʿādh al-Rāzī al-Naysabūrī (d. 258) is the Imām, preacher, and ḥadīth Master who said: “Son of man, your religion will remain in tatters as long as your heart clings to love of the world.”

<sup>269</sup> Narrated by al-Qushayrī without chain. At the time al-Junayd was accused of heresy by the anthropomorphists of Baghdād, his student Abū al-Ḥasan al-Nūrī (d. 295) was asked by the chief judge in the presence of the Caliph, al-Mutawakkil: “Where is your Lord in relation to you?” He replied: “He is, in relation to me, wherever I am in relation to Him, since He said: {*He is with you wheresoever you are*} (57:4). That is: He is with us in whatever way we are with Him. If we are with Him with obedience, He is with us with help and guidance; if we are with Him with heedlessness, He is with us with His will; if we are with Him with disobedience, He is with us with His delay; if we are with Him with repentance, He is with us with acceptance; if we are with Him with abandonment of His commands, He is with us with punishment.” In Ibn ‘Ajība, *Iqāz al-Himam* (Beirut: al-Maktaba al-Thaqāfiyya) p. 397. Cf. also further below, §71-72 (for a similarly figurative interpretation of *nuzūl*) and especially n. 335, 341, chapters 3-4 and notes. Ibn Shāhīn is the trustworthy ḥadīth master Abū Ḥafṣ ‘Umar ibn Aḥmad ibn ‘Uthmān (d. 385) who, despite his imperfect Arabic and poor *fiqh*, authored 330 works in *tafsīr*, ḥadīth, history, and morals cf. al-Suyūtī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Huffāz* (1:393).

<sup>270</sup> Narrated by al-Qushayrī without chain. Abū al-Fayḍ Dhū al-Nūn al-Miṣrī (d. 245) the ascetic Imām of the Sufis in Egypt from whom Mālik and others narrated ḥadīth. Among his sayings: “I never ate to satiation except I purported some sin.”

Al-Shibli ؓ was asked about the same verse and said: "The All-Merciful exists from pre-eternity while the Throne was brought into being, and the Throne was established and made firm (*istawā*) by the All-Merciful."<sup>271</sup> 29

Ja'far ibn Nuṣayr ؓ said about that verse: "His knowledge applies equally (*istawā*) to all things, and nothing is closer to Him than something else."<sup>272</sup> 30

<sup>271</sup> Cited by al-Qushayrī in his *Risāla* and by Ibn Farḥūn in *al-Dībāj al-Mudhahhab* (p. 116), both without chain while Ibn Taymiyya cites it in his *Istiḳāma* (Madīna ed. 1:189) from al-Qushayrī but contests both its authenticity and content. Yet Abū Ḥanīfa in the *Waṣīyya* ("Allāh established Himself on the Throne without his having need for it and without settlement on it as He is the Preserver of the Throne and other than the Throne"), al-Ash'arī in some versions of the *Ibāna* ("The Throne does not carry him, rather the Throne and its carriers are carried by the subtleness of His power"), and Shaykh Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn 'Arabī in his *'Aqīda* (§143: "He established Himself over His Throne just as He said and in the meaning that He intended; the Throne itself and everything else was established through Him") all confirm al-Shibli's words. See our article, "Allāh is Now as He Ever Was" in our *Sunna Notes* series. Abū Bakr Dulaf ibn Jaḥdar al-Shibli al-Baghdādī al-Mālikī (d. 334) was one of al-Junayd's foremost students, a Sufi master, ḥadīth scholar, and jurist. Among his sayings: "I know one who did not enter into this matter until he spent all he owned, wore out seventy book-satchels with his handwritings, memorized *al-Muwaṭṭa'*, and was able to recite in so many canonical readings – meaning himself. When asked what the mark of the Knower of Allāh was he replied: "His chest has been expanded, his heart wounded, and his body cast off."

<sup>272</sup> Narrated by al-Qushayrī without chain while Ibn Taymiyya frantically inveighs against it in his *Istiḳāma* (Madīna ed. 1:190): "This is more frivolous than the figurative interpretations of the esotericist Qarmaṭīs, for the original wording [of the verse] does not contain anything that suggests such a meaning whatsoever! And Ja'far ibn Nuṣayr is nobler than to commit such a corruption of meaning (*taḥrīf*) the like of which does not come except from some of the extremists among the Rāfiḍīs, the Qarmaṭīs, and the atheists who question the Qur'ān!" Yet al-Ash'arī's *Ibāna* states: "He is above the Throne and the Heavens and above everything to the limits of the earth with an aboveness which does not bring Him nearer to the Throne and the Heavens, just as it does not make Him farther from the earth. Rather, He is Highly Exalted above the Throne and the Heavens just as He is Highly Exalted above the earth. Yet He is near to every entity and is nearer to [the worshipper] than his jugular vein and He witnesses everything." Abū Muḥammad Ja'far ibn Muḥammad ibn Nuṣayr al-Khuldī (d. 348) is the trustworthy Imām of ḥadīth and *taṣawwuf* who accompanied al-Junayd and authored books. Abū al-'Alā' 'Ābidīn said: "As for the *Khalaf*, when the innovations and heresies appeared they resigned the interpretation of those [verses and narrations of the Attributes] and allegorized them out of fear of disbelief. So they chose the innovation of *ta'wīl*, that is, free

31 Ja'far al-Šādiq ؑ said: "Whoever claims that Allāh ﷻ is in (*fī*) something or from (*min*) something or on (*'alā*) something [43] has committed idolatry. For if He were in something, He would be surrounded (*maḥṣūr*); if He were on something, He would be carried; if He were from something, He would be brought into being."<sup>273</sup>

rein in it (*al-tawassu' fīh*) over the *kufr* of taking the words literally in a way that suggests anthropomorphism and likeness. So they said that '*istawā* means *istawlā*' or that it means that 'the creation of the Throne and that of a mosquito are on a par (*istawā*)' to Him, or that 'His knowledge of the Thone and of everything else is on a par,' and that 'the Hand means the power' and 'the descent means the descent of mercy.' Whoever finds in himself the capacity to tread the way of the *Salaf*, let him do it, otherwise, let him follow the *Khalaf* and beware of destruction." Cited by al-Ghāwī in his notes on Ibn Jamā' a's *Idāh al-Dalīl* (p. 57).

<sup>273</sup> Cited by Imām al-Qushayrī in the *Risāla*, Shaykh Aḥmad al-Rifā'ī's (512-578) in *al-Burhān al-Mu'ayyad* (p. 19), and al-Tilimsānī in *Naḥḥ al-Ṭīb* (5:290), all without chain, while Ibn Taymiyya cites it in his *Istiḳāma* (Madīna ed. 1:190) from al-Qushayrī without contesting its authenticity. Cf. [1] Abū Ḥanīfa's *al-Fiqh al-Absat*: "If someone says, 'Where is Allāh?' The answer for him is that Allāh existed when there was no 'where,' no creation, nothing! And He is the Creator of everything." [2] Al-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr* (Sūrat 2:29): "He is high and elevated over the heaven with the height of sovereignty and power, not the height of displacement and movement to and fro." [3] *Ṭaḥāwīyya*: "He is beyond having limits placed on Him, or having boundaries, or having parts, limbs, or organs; nor is He contained by the six directions as all created things are." [4] *Qushayriyya*: "Do you subject the Absolute to 'where?' (*taṭlubu ma'a al-'ayni ayn?*") [5] Al-Bayhaqī, *Manāqib al-Shāfi'ī* (1:396-398): "The Prophet ﷺ addressed the slave-girl [in the ḥadīth 'Where is Allāh?'] according to her ability and understanding. For she and the likes of her, before Islām, used to believe in idols as gods on earth. Accordingly, he wanted to know what she believed and asked her, 'Where is Allāh?' Had she pointed to the idols, it would have been known that she was not a believer. When she said, 'in the heaven,' it became known that she had abandoned idols and that she was a believer in Allāh {*Who in the heaven is God, and in the earth God*} (43:84) or he gestured, as she gestured, to the literal wording of what was mentioned in the Book." [6] Al-Nawawī after Qāḍī 'Iyād, *Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* (5:24-25): "Not that He is circumscribed in the heaven nor that He is circumscribed in the direction of the Ka'ba! Rather, this is because the heaven is the orientation (*qibla*) of those who supplicate, just as the Ka'ba is the orientation of those who worship." [7] Ibn Ḥajar, *Fath al-Bārī* (1959 ed. 13:412): "Al-Kirmānī (d. 668) said: 'The literal meaning of "the one who is in the heaven" is not meant, for Allāh is transcendent beyond indwelling a place. However, since the direction of elevation is nobler than any other direction, Allāh predicated it to Himself to indicate the loftiness of His Essence and Attributes.' Others than al-Kirmānī addressed in similar terms the expressions that

Muḥammad ibn Maḥbūb, Abū 'Uthmān al-Maghribī's servant, said: "Abū 'Uthmān said to me one day: 'Muḥammad! If someone asked you: Where is the One you worship, what would you answer?' I said: 'I would answer: He is where He never ceased to be.' He said: 'What if he asked: Where was He in pre-eternity?' I said: 'I would answer: Where He is now.'" That is: He was when there was no place, and He is now as He ever was. "Abū 'Uthmān was pleased with my answer. He took off his shirt and gave it to me."<sup>274</sup>

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came down concerning aboveness (*fawqiyya*)." [8] Al-Qārī, *al-Mirqāt* (orig. ed. 3:492): "When she said: 'in the heaven' – in another narration she made a sign toward the heaven – it was understood she was a believer in oneness. He meant by this line of questioning the disavowal of the gods of the earth (*naḥī al-āliha al-arḍiyya*) which are the idols, not the establishment of the heaven as a location for Allāh Most High!" [9] Ibn Rushd the grandson [Averroes], *Faṣl al-Maqāl* (p. 52-53): "The reason behind it [the Prophet's command] pertains to that category of people to whom belief is inconceivable without visualization. They do not believe in the existence of a thing except if they can imagine it and it is difficult for them to believe in the existence of a thing that cannot be compared to something one can visualize. This [reasoning] also applies to those who cannot understand from such ascription [*i.e. istiwa'* and *nuzūl*] other than a place (*makān*). They assault the first category incompetently for their denial of corporeality. This is why the proper answer for them is to tell them that such [verses and ḥadīths] are among the ambiguities (*al-mutashābihāt*)." See more below (notes 296, 326) and the discussion on aboveness in our article, "The Ḥadīth of the Mountain Goats" in our *Sunna Notes* series. Abū 'Abd Allāh Ja'far al-Ṣādiq ibn Muhammad al-Bāqir ibn Zayn al-'Abidīn ibn al-Ḥusayn al-Hāshimī al-Qurashī (80-148) is the Truthful Imām of the *Tābi'īn* from whom narrated Abū Ḥanīfa, Mālik, and others.

<sup>274</sup> Narrated by al-Qushayrī from Ibn Fūrak, from Muḥammad ibn al-Maḥbūb. This and the following paragraph are from al-Qushayrī's *Risāla* (p. 37-38). See also our article, "Allāh is Now as He Ever Was" in our *Sunna Notes*. Abū 'Uthmān al-Maghribī, also known as Ibn Sha'bān and Abū 'Uthmān al-Qayrawānī, Sa'id ibn Sallām al-Maghribī al-Manṣūrī al-Qayrawānī al-Naysabūrī (d. 373), was one of the Sufi masters. Among his sayings: "Retreat (*al-i' tikāf*) is the guarding of limbs under the commands." "The sincere one's knowledge of his sincerity is invalid until he knows his self-display and parts with it, for one does not know something until he knows its opposite." "The Sufi is he who owns things by choice, and nothing owns him by force." "There is a time for the knower when the lights of 'ilm enlighten him so that he can see the wonders of the unseen." "The hearts of the people of truth are present, and their hearings are open."

- 33 Abū ‘Uthmān al-Maghribī said: “I used to believe something of the doctrine of direction for Allāh, but when I came to Baghdād this went away from my heart, whereupon I wrote to my companions in Makka that I had embraced Islām anew.” At that time everyone who followed him renounced their belief in direction for Allāh ﷻ.<sup>275</sup>
- 34 The above are the words of the most eminent authorities in *tawhīd* and the Imāms of the massive majority of the Community, except for this misguided band. The books of our Imāms are replete with such statements and with their almost countless refutations of those evil insinulators. Our purpose is not to imitate them – for this is forbidden in the foundations of belief.<sup>276</sup> I mentioned their words only so that it will be understood that the doctrine of *Ahl al-Sunna* is what we showed above.

<sup>275</sup> Narrated by al-Qushayrī from Ibn Fūrak, from Abū ‘Uthmān al-Maghribī.

<sup>276</sup> This never means one is free to formulate his or her own creed independently. What is meant is that each must have a firm personal conviction and belief in the generalities of transcendence concerning Allāh Most High and His Names and Attributes. As for the precise formulations of that doctrine, they remain outside the province of the commonality and are left to the authorities to whom Allāh Most High gave competence in the matter, such as al-Ash‘arī, al-Māturīdī, and those Ibn Jahbal cited. Thus, insofar as *formulation* is concerned, it is not only permissible but obligatory to imitate them in order to preclude heterodoxy from oneself and others. On this the Ash‘arīs and the Māturīdīs agree, contrary to the Mu‘tazilis who require knowledge of the (rational) proof for every article of faith, and not faith alone. This squarely contradicts the way of the Prophet ﷺ who only required faith. Cf. Abū ‘Adhaba (d. 1172), *al-Rawḍat al-Bahiyya fīmā bayn al-Ashā‘ira wal-Māturīdiyya* in Bassām ‘Abd al-Wahhāb al-Jābī, *al-Masā’il al-Khulāfiyya bayn al-Ashā‘ira wal-Māturīdiyya* (Dār Ibn Ḥazm, 2003) p. 102-106.

The Requisites of Transcendence  
(*Wazā'if al-Taqdīs*)<sup>277</sup>

We continue by saying that whosoever hears the verses and reports that touch upon the Divine Attributes has the following duties: 35

- To uphold Divine Transcendence.
- To believe in what came from Allāh ﷻ and from His Prophet ﷺ in the sense that He meant and the sense that the Prophet ﷺ meant.
- To confirm and admit one's inability [to comprehend it].
- To keep silent and refrain from paraphrasing the original terms [of these verses and reports].
- To put an end to any mental reflection upon them.
- To hold firmly that whatever is hidden from one's understanding concerning them is not hidden from Allāh nor from His Prophet ﷺ.

The elaboration of the above duties is forthcoming, if Allāh wills.<sup>278</sup>

<sup>277</sup> Taken from al-Ghazzālī's *Iljām al-ʿAwāmm*. See Chapter Eleven: "Ethics of *Tawḥīd*."

<sup>278</sup> Cf. §225-245.

36 Would that I knew in what respect we [Ash‘aris] contravene the *Salaf*! Is it because we say: “He was when there was no place”? Or because we say: “Allāh created place”? Or because we say: “He is now as He ever was”? [44] Or because we say: “The Real is Transcendent beyond corporeality and anything remotely resembling it”? Or because we say: “It is obligatory to declare true whatever Allāh said and whatever the Prophet ﷺ said, in the sense that Allāh meant and the sense that the Prophet ﷺ meant”? Or because we say: “It is obligatory to admit incapacity to comprehend it”? Or because we say: “We must keep silent and not ask questions nor probe what we are incapable of knowing”? Or because we say: “It is obligatory for the tongue to refrain from modifying the letter of the texts, neither adding nor subtracting anything”?

37 Would that I knew in what respect they [the Ḥashwiyya] conform with the *Salaf*! Is it in their invitation to probe this subject and their insistence on delving into it in the company of gullible juveniles and uneducated mobs who cannot even wash their backsides correctly or fulfill the necessary pillars of *ṣalāt*? Or did they conform with the *Salaf* in the latter’s upholding of Divine Transcendence and freedom from direction? Did they ever hear it said in the Book of Allāh, or related from the *Salaf* as an article of knowledge, that the latter described Allāh Most High as being in the upward direction (*jihat al-‘uluw*)? Or that anyone that does not so describe Him is misguided and leading others astray, and is “an offshoot from the philosophers and the Hindus and the Greeks”?<sup>279</sup> {*See how they invent lies about Allāh! That of itself is flagrant sin*} (4:50).

<sup>279</sup> The author is quoting Ibn Taymiyya’s astonishing accusation, which he addresses further down cf. §44 and n. 378.



## REFUTATION OF IBN TAYMIYYA'S CLAIMS

### PRELIMINARIES

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We now turn to destroy his arguments, after which we establish the proofs of the negation of direction and likeness for Allāh in relation to all his claims. In Allāh is our recourse! 38

First, he claimed that he says “what Allāh said, His Prophet ﷺ, and the First and Foremost (*al-sābiqūn al-awwalūn*) among the Emigrants and the Helpers.”<sup>280</sup> 39

This is not true in the least. As for the Book and the Sunna, we shall show that he contradicts them both. As for the First and Foremost among the Emigrants and the Helpers, his mention of them in this place is purely for show. Apart from that, he did not produce a single word of theirs, whether denying or confirming him. This can be known from what he says – unless what he means by “the First and Foremost among the Emigrants and Helpers” is the Shaykhs of his own doctrine at the exclusion of the Companions!<sup>281</sup> 40

<sup>280</sup> *Fatwā Hamawiyya* (p. 194-195) = *Majmū' al-Fatāwā* (5:5-6).

<sup>281</sup> “Ibn Taymiyya’s habit is to take something he found one scholar saying and make it a universal rule of his own.” Al-Kawtharī, *al-Ḥāwī fī Sīrat al-Imām Abī Ja‘far al-Ṭahāwī* (p. 28).

41 [45] After this claim, he launched into praising the Prophet ﷺ and his Religion, saying that his Companions are its most knowledgeable figures.<sup>282</sup> The truth is as he said and more than what he said, for how can praise render justice to the Prophet's ﷺ merits? Yet his words are, as the Commander of the Believers 'Alī ibn Abī Tālib ؑ said, "Words of truth spoken to support falsehood!" (*kalimatu ḥaqq yurādu bihā bāṭil*).<sup>283</sup>

42 After this he started reviling the Imāms of the Community and its leading scholars for admitting incapacity to comprehend Allāh Almighty.<sup>284</sup>

43 Yet, the Master of Messengers ﷺ said: "I cannot sufficiently extol Your praise! Verily You are just as You have glorified Yourself."<sup>285</sup> Similarly the Trusted and Truthful one [Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq] ؓ said: "Incapacity to attain comprehension is comprehension."<sup>286</sup> So then this impostor has the audacity to claim complete knowledge in the matter. Now, the children of menstruating women can know the exact nature of Him Who is

<sup>282</sup> *Ḥamawiyya* (p. 195-202) = *Majmū' al-Fatāwā* (5:6-8).

<sup>283</sup> Narrated from 'Ubayd Allāh ibn Abī Rāfi' by Muslim, al-Nasā'ī in *al-Sunan al-Kubrā* (5:160 §8562), Ibn Ḥibbān (15:387 §6939), and al-Bayhaqī in his *Sunan* (8:171); from Kathīr ibn Nimr by al-Ṭabarānī in *al-Awsaṭ* (7:376 §7771); from Kathīr ibn Nimr and 'Āshim ibn Ḍamra by al-Bayhaqī in his *Sunan* (8:184); from Kathīr ibn Nimr and Abū al-Bakhtārī by Ibn Abī Shayba (7:562 §37930-37931); from one of 'Alī's scribes, 'Abd Allāh ibn Ḥunayn, by al-Maḥāmīlī (d. 330) in his *Amālī* (p. 173 §144); from 'Awn ibn Abī Juḥayfa by al-Ṭabarī in his *Tārīkh* (3:113); and from Qatāda by 'Abd al-Razzāq in his *Muṣannaḥ* (10:150). Cited by al-Shāfi'ī in *al-Umm* (4:217), Ibn Ḥibbān in *al-Thiqāt* (2:295), al-Nawawī in *Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* (7:173), Ibn Ḥajar in the *Fath* (12:284-288) and *Talkhīṣ al-Ḥabīr* (4:45), and Ibn Kathīr in the *Bidāya* (Year 37).

<sup>284</sup> *Ḥamawiyya* (p. 204-213) = *Majmū' al-Fatāwā* (5:9-11).

<sup>285</sup> Narrated from 'Ā'isha and 'Alī in the Nine Books except al-Bukhārī and Dārimī.

<sup>286</sup> Attributed – without chain – to Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq by al-Sulamī in *al-Muqaddīma fil-Taṣawwuf* (p. 36) and subsequent Sufi sources such as 'Ayn al-Qudāt al-Hamadhānī's *Shakwā al-Gharīb*, and Ibn 'Arabī and his commentators cf. also al-Suyūṭī's *Sharḥ Sunan al-Nasā'ī* (1:105 §169), al-Munāwī's *Fayḍ al-Qadīr* (6:181) under the ḥadīth *man 'alima anna Allāha rabbuhu wa-annī nabīyyuh*, and al-Qārī at the very beginning of his *Risāla fī Radd Waḥdat al-Wujūd* (p. 54), all without chain.

without beginning! There is no delusion nor ignorance greater than such a claim. We seek refuge in Allāh ﷻ from downfall!

After this he described the lineage of the doctrine of the massive majority of the Community of Muḥammad ﷺ as being an offshoot of the doctrines of the philosophers, the followers of the Greeks and the Hindus!<sup>287</sup> {*Their testimony will be recorded and they will be questioned!*} (43:19). 44-45

Then he said: “The Book of Allāh from beginning to end, the Sunna of His Prophet ﷺ from beginning to end, the totality of the words of the Companions and the Successors, and the words of the rest of the Imāms are replete either with explicit stipulations (*naṣṣ*) or literal expressions (*zāhir*) that Allāh is above everything (*fawqa kulli shay*) and on top of everything (‘*alā kulli shay*’), and that He is above the Throne (*fawq al-‘arsh*) and above the heaven (*fawq al-samā*)”<sup>288</sup> In the course of this statement and again towards the end, he said: “He is literally (*ḥaqīqatan*) above the Throne.” Elsewhere he attributed the same words to the *Salaf*.<sup>289</sup> 46

I would like to know where the terms he claims to relate from the Book of Allāh and the Sunna of His Messenger ﷺ are found in the Book of Allāh? Is one word of his found anywhere in the Book of Allāh which would permit him to say: “There is an explicit statement to that effect”? For the explicit statement by definition bears no other possible interpretation whatsoever. Yet his 47

<sup>287</sup> *Ḥamawīyya* (p. 213-215) = *Majmū‘ al-Fatāwā* (5:12). Cf. n. 378.

<sup>288</sup> *Ḥamawīyya* (p. 216) = *Majmū‘ al-Fatāwā* (5:12).

<sup>289</sup> *Ḥamawīyya* (p. 232) = *Majmū‘ al-Fatāwā* (5:15). Abū Zahra said in *Tārīkh al-Madhāhib al-Islāmiyya* (p. 320-322): “The ‘Salafīs’ and Ibn Taymiyya assert that settledness takes place over the Throne [...]. Ibn Taymiyya strenuously asserts that Allāh descends and can be above (*fawq*) and below (*taht*) ‘without how’ [...]. and that the school of the *Salaf* is the literal affirmation of everything that the Qur’ān stated concerning aboveness (*fawqīyya*), belowness (*taḥṭīyya*), and establishment over the Throne.”

purpose is precisely to effect such an interpretation. For he has redefined "explicit" to mean other than what is patent, by misrepresenting his own terms as constituting explicit texts. Now, which verse in the entire Book of Allāh forms an explicit text for his viewpoint?

## CHAPTER ONE

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### The Fallacy of His “Proofs from the Qurʾān” and the Ḥashwiyya’s Self-Contradictions

The first proof he forwarded is the saying of Allāh ﷻ: {*Unto Him the good word ascends (yaṣʿadu)*} (35:10).<sup>290</sup> [46] Where in the verse, I ask, is the “explicit text” that says Allāh is in the heaven or on the Throne? 48

Moreover, the practical purpose of his using this verse for a proof is that it indicates the height (‘*uluw*) implied by ascent (‘*ṣuʿūd*).<sup>291</sup> How far off the mark! The dunce of scholasticism has tumbled in the mire. For how can ascension literally apply to words when the literal meaning of ascension can only be the attribute of bodies? Therefore, the sense of ascension here is none other than acceptance (*al-qabūl*), without an inkling of boundary or location.<sup>292</sup> 49

<sup>290</sup> *Ḥamawīyya* (p. 216) = *Majmūʿ al-Fatāwā* (5:12).

<sup>291</sup> “Allāh has made Himself exalted over the heaven (‘*alā ʿalayhā*) with the ‘*uluw* of sovereignty (*mulk*) and authority (*sulṭān*), not movement (*intiḡāl*) or displacement (*zawāl*).” Al-Ṭabarī, commentary on the verse: {*Then turned He (thumma istawā) to the heaven*} (2:29).

<sup>292</sup> See article “Unto Him the Good Word Ascends” in our *Sunna Notes* series.

50 Then he followed up with the saying of Allāh ﷻ: {I am gathering you and raising you (*rāfi'uka*) unto Me} (3:55).<sup>293</sup> I do not know how he inferred the idea that Allāh is above the Throne from this verse. Was this inference on the basis of sameness (*muṭābaqa*), or implication (*taḍammun*), or logical necessity (*iltizām*)? Or is it something he obtained through miraculous unveiling (*kashf*) or inspiration in his innermost (*al-naḥṭhu fil-rū'*)? Perhaps he believes that elevation (*al-raf'*) can only be in the upward direction? If this is what occurred to him then this, also, is inconceivable except in corporeal and dimensional terms. If he holds other than that, then his inference is not on a literal basis at all. If he actually asserts corporeality and dimensionality, then there is no need to point out his error. Perhaps he never heard of elevation being used in the sense of rank and the obtainment of status in the language of the Arabs and in common usage. Perhaps he never heard the phrase "Allāh raised So-and-so's state."<sup>294</sup>

<sup>293</sup> *Ḥamawīyya* (p. 216) = *Majmū' al-Fatāwā* (5:12).

<sup>294</sup> The commentaries indicate that the sense of {raising you unto Me} is: "raising you to My heaven." Cf. the *Tafsīrs* of al-Ṭabarī (*ākḥidhuka ilā mā 'indī... fa huwa 'indahu fil-samā'*), al-Qurṭubī (*rafa'ahu ilā al-samā'*), al-Nasāfi ("raising you to My heaven and to the abode of My angels"), al-Bayḍāwī and Abū al-Su'ūd ("to the place of My munificence and the abode of My angels"). Al-Tha'ālibī said: "It denotes his being moved from lowliness to height (*min suflin ilā 'uluw*) but its ascription unto Allāh is an ascription of honor. In any case, it is categorically known that Allāh Most High is not circumscribed in any direction."

Then he followed up with the saying of Allāh ﷻ: {*Have you taken security from Him Who is in the heaven that He will not cause the earth to swallow you*} (67:16), restricting the meaning of “him” to Allāh alone.<sup>295</sup> Perhaps he does not allow that its meaning is the angels of Allāh. Perhaps he denies that the angels do such things, and that Gibrīl ﷺ caused the earth to swallow the people of Sodom. Consequently he used this verse for his proof, and it may be the “explicit text” he was referring to.<sup>296</sup> 51

Then he followed up with the saying of Allāh: {*The angels and the Spirit ascend (ta‘ruju) unto Him*} (70:4).<sup>297</sup> Ascension (‘urūj) and ascent (ṣu‘ūd) are one and the same meaning. There is no proof in this verse that the ascension is to a heaven or to a throne or to any of the things which [47] he has claimed whatsoever. For the literal meaning of “ascension” used in the language of the Arabs refers to the displacement appropriate to material bodies (*al-ajsām*). The Arabs do not know any other meaning of the word. Would that he had openly declared the material sense and relieved himself from the trouble of covering it up! 52

<sup>295</sup> Ḥamawīyya (p. 216-217) = *Majmū‘ al-Fatāwā* (5:12-13).

<sup>296</sup> Al-Maḥallī in *Tafsīr al-Jalālayn*: {*From Him Who is in the heaven*}: “From Him Whose authority and power are in the heaven.” Al-Qurṭubī: “From the Creator of those who are in the heaven.” Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *Tafsīr* (3:69): “It is the anthropomorphists who used this verse to claim that Allāh Himself is in the sky.” Abū Ḥayyān al-Andalusī said the same thing in his *Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ* (8:302) and *Nahr al-Mādd* (2:1131-1132). Al-Nawawī in his commentary on *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* agreed with al-Qāḍī ‘Iyāḍ that the words “in the heaven” are interpreted figuratively. Al-Zamakhsharī: “From Him Whose sovereignty is in the Heaven.” When “Whose sovereignty” is omitted the pronoun “Him” remains instead. There are many instances of this turn of speech in the Qur’ān: “And ask the town,” that is: “And ask the people of the town”; “And your Lord came,” that is: “And your Lord’s order came” cf. “Interpreting Allāh’s Words ‘He Who is in the Heaven’ in *Islamic Beliefs and Doctrine According to Ahl al-Sunna* (p. 144-148). See also above, n. 273 and below, §78 and n. 326.

<sup>297</sup> Ḥamawīyya (p. 217) = *Majmū‘ al-Fatāwā* (5:13).

- 53 Then he followed up with the saying of Allāh: {*They fear their Lord from above them (min fawqihim)*} (16:50).<sup>298</sup> This also fails to provide a proof for him pertaining to a heaven or a throne, least of all in literal terms.
- 54 Aboveness (*fawqiyya*) is used in two senses:

- (a) As a relation between one material body and another, one being higher and the other lower, so that the bottom of the higher one is above the top of the lower one. This sense of aboveness is never invoked by non-anthropomorphists. If we suppose it applied – without saying that Allāh is a body – then why would it not be possible to say that “above them” modifies “they fear”? The sense would then be: “They fear from above them their Lord.” That is, they fear what comes from above them and whatever punishment may come from that direction.
- (b) In the sense of rank (*al-martaba*) just as is it said: the caliph is above the sultan, and the sultan above the emir. It is also said: So-and-so sat above So-and-so; knowledge stands above deeds; the dyeing process is above the tanning process. This sense applies in the saying of Allāh: {*And We have raised some of them above (fawqa) others in rank*} (43:32), in which case they did not mount one another’s shoulders. Again, in His saying: {*We are in power over them (fawqahum)*} (7:127), the Copts were not mounted atop the shoulders of the Israelites nor on their backs.<sup>299</sup>

<sup>298</sup> *Ḥamawīyya* (p. 217) = *Majmū‘ al-Fatāwā* (5:13).

<sup>299</sup> “He is high and elevated over the heaven with the height (‘*uluw*) of sovereignty and power.” Al-Ṭabarī, commentary on the verse {*Then turned He (thumma istawā) to the heaven, and fashioned it as seven heavens*} (2:29). See also the discussion on aboveness in our article, “The Ḥadīth of the Mountain Goats” in *Sunna Notes*.



He followed up with the saying of Allāh ﷻ: {*The Merciful established Himself over the Throne*} (20:5).<sup>300</sup> This has been mentioned in six other passages of the Book of Allāh<sup>301</sup> and forms the main and strongest basis on which the anthropomorphists stand. They even wrote it above the entrance of the mosque in Hamadhān. We now turn our efforts to clarifying the issue. 55

We say: [48] Either they set reason aside in every aspect of every case, ignoring what is called understanding (*fahm*) and comprehension (*idrāk*), which is quite acceptable if they merely say: {*The Merciful established Himself over the Throne*} (20:5).<sup>302</sup> But if they trespass this point and venture to say: “He is established over the Throne” (*innahu mustawin ‘alā al-‘arsh*), then fie upon them! For Allāh ﷻ never said it. Add to this that there is near agreement among the rhetoricians (*‘ulamā’ al-bayān*) that the verbal noun is more affirmative in meaning than the verb.<sup>303</sup> If the Ḥashwiyya say: “The verse indicates that He is above the Throne,” then they have abandoned their own precondition [of not probing meanings] and indulged in contradiction, caprice, and impudence. 56

Should they say: “We do retain the role of reason and we do understand the meaning of the verse,” we ask them: What is the meaning of *istiwā’* in the language of the Arabs? If they say: “Sitting (*al-julūs*) and settlement (*al-istiqrār*),” we reply: The Arabs do not know this meaning except in relation to bodies, 57

<sup>300</sup> *Hamawiyya* (p. 217) = *Majmū’ al-Fatāwā* (5:13).

<sup>301</sup> 7:54; 10:3; 13:52; 25:59; 32:4; 57:4.

<sup>302</sup> In strict conformity with the rule of the *Salaf*, “its explanation is its recitation” without adding anything else.

<sup>303</sup> E.g. the verbal noun *mustawin* is more affirmative than the verb *istawā*. However, the claim that Allāh ﷻ is *mustawin* is forbidden because His Names and Attributes are non-inferable. See our articles “The Divine Names are *Tawqīfiyya*: Ordained and Non-Inferable” and “*Istiwā’* a Divine Act” in our *Sunna Notes* series.

therefore go ahead and say: A body established itself on the Throne. If they reply: "It is a type of sitting and settledness that is attributed to the Essence of Allāh just like sitting is attributed to a body," then the Arabs do not know this meaning. Therefore, it cannot be the literal meaning.

58 The Arabs also understand *istiwā'* as the straightness of the arrow-shaft and the antonym of crookedness. The Ḥashwiyya invoke this meaning to exonerate themselves of the charge of attributing a body to Allāh. At the same time, they close the door to any explanation other than "sitting." Yet they do not close the door when it comes to the saying of Allāh: {*And He is with you wheresoever you may be*} (57:4) and {*We are nearer to him than his jugular vein*} (50:16). So you Ḥashwiyya should not say that Allāh is with us "with His knowledge." If you say that, then why do you allow this [interpretive method] one time and you forbid it the next? And how do you know that *istiwā'* is not one of His acts in connection with the Throne? If they say: "This is not in the language of the Arabs," then we reply: Neither is the meaning of *istawā* which you yourselves forward – unless we apply it to a body.<sup>304</sup>

59 Then the impostor tried hard to extricate himself from the snare of anthropomorphism by claiming that Allāh ﷻ is in a direction [49] but that He established Himself over the Throne "with a kind of establishment that befits His Majesty."<sup>305</sup> We say to him: You have moved to our position concerning *istiwā'*; but as for direction, it does not befit His majesty.

<sup>304</sup> Cf. Ibn al-Jawzī in *Daf' Shubah al-Tashbīh* (1998 al-Kawtharī repr. p. 23): "Whoever interprets {*and He is with you*} (57:4) as meaning 'He is with you in knowledge,' permits his opponent to interpret *istiwā'* as 'subduing' (*al-qahr*)."

<sup>305</sup> *Ḥamawīyya* (p. 274-275) = *Majmū' al-Fatāwā* (5:27-28).

Then he criticized the saying of the Scholars of *kalām* that if Allāh ﷻ were in a certain direction, He would be either greater, smaller, or equal to something, all of which possibilities are absurd. He said: "They [the Scholars of *kalām*] did not grasp the meaning of {*over the Throne*} except as the meaning they assert for any material body over any other body whatsoever. What they cited as an inevitable consequence stems only from that understanding. But an *istiwā'* which befits His Majesty does not necessitate any such consequence."<sup>306</sup> 60

We answer: Are you from Tamīm one day and from Qays another?<sup>307</sup> If you assert an establishment which befits His Majesty, then this is the position of the *kalām* scholars. But if you are speaking of an establishment that consists in settledness and a specific direction as opposed to another direction, then that will not in any way help deliver you from what we already said [about its consequences being anthropomorphism], nor from the [Ash'arī] explanation of the establishment as "establishing dominion" (*istilā'*). 61

I bear witness before Allāh concerning this verse, that it never came down to us except to reveal Divine magnificence, power, dominion, and sovereignty! The Arabs use *istiwā'* as a metonymy (*kināya*) for sovereignty (*mulk*), for they say: "So-and-so established himself on the royal throne," even if he never once sat on it, for they mean sovereignty thereby. 62

As for the saying of the Ḥashwiyya: "If you explain *istiwā'* as *istilā'* then the specific mention of the Throne becomes irrelevant, for the establishment of His dominion is true over all things created, without restriction to the Throne,"<sup>308</sup> the answer 63

<sup>306</sup> *Ḥamawīyya* (p. 274) = *Majmū' al-Fatāwā* (5:27).

<sup>307</sup> These names denote two different sets of grammatical rules in Arabic.

<sup>308</sup> Cf. words attributed to al-Ash'arī, *Ḥamawīyya* (p. 504-505) = *Majmū'* (5:96-97), but see Imām Aḥmad's explanation below (notes 342, 371).

to this is: Because the Throne encompasses all things created, it is precisely then that the establishment of dominion over it is the establishment of dominion over all of them. No other object possesses this quality. Moreover, the Arabs' use of it as a metonymy – as we just said – makes this the most probable explanation.

64 As for their objecting: “The meaning of ‘establishing dominion’ (*istilā*) can only be over something which one defends from attack.”<sup>309</sup> We reply: The meaning of ‘sitting’ can only apply to a body, and yet you said that you do not hold He is a body.<sup>310</sup>

65 If they had described Him [50] in terms of “the Establishment over the Throne” (*al-istiwā* ‘*alā al-‘arsh*) we would not have objected to them for it, but we would consider this merely to resemble *tashbīh* or coming dangerously close to it.<sup>311</sup> And Allāh is the Grantor of success.

66 The impostor then produced, as another one of his proofs, the saying of Allāh ﷻ reporting Pharaoh's words: {O Hāmān! Build for me a tower that haply I may reach the roads, the roads of the heavens, and may look upon the God of Mūsā} (40:36-37).<sup>312</sup>

67 I truly wonder how he understood from Pharaoh's words that Allāh Almighty is above the heavens and above the Throne so that the God of Mūsā ﷻ can be looked upon! For Allāh ﷻ did not mention that the God of Mūsā is in the heavens. Let us hypothetically say that this can be understood from Pharaoh's words. How can he produce as a proof Pharaoh's idea and

<sup>309</sup> This objection was made by Dāwūd al-Zāhirī and was rejected by al-Rāghib, Ibn Baṭṭāl, and Ibn Ḥajar among others cf. our article “*Istiwā* is a Divine Act” in *Sunna Notes*.

<sup>310</sup> I.e. just as you hold that He is not a body although He sits, so do we hold that He is not facing any defense despite His *istilā*. On the interpretations of *istiwā* as *istilā* by Ash‘aris and as “sitting” (*Julūs*) by the anthropomorphists, see “*Istiwā* is a Divine Act”

<sup>311</sup> Because “the Establishment” implies anthropomorphism more remotely than to say “the Establishment of Allāh.” In addition, the latter is an inadmissible inference, since the Attributes are non-inferable.

<sup>312</sup> *Ḥamawīyya* (p. 217) = *Majmū‘ al-Fatāwā* (5:13).

understanding, concerning whom Allāh said that *{the evil that he did was made fair-seeming unto Pharaoh, and he was debarred from the right way, and his plot ended but in ruin}* (40:37)?

Also, when Pharaoh asked Mūsā: *{And what is the Lord of the worlds?}* (26:23), Mūsā did not broach the concept of direction. He only mentioned the most specific of Attributes, namely, the power of Allāh to invent and create.<sup>313</sup> If direction were established as true, it would have been more appropriate to make it known! For sensory indications are among the strongest means of cognition, both in terms of sensory perception and common usage.

Furthermore, Pharaoh asked his question in terms of “what.” Therefore, a reply addressing dimensionality (*al-taḥayyuz*) would have been more to the point than the one that mentions the aforesaid Attribute.

The extent of his [Ibn Taymiyya’s] understanding of this verse, whence he produced his proof, is Pharaoh’s understanding.<sup>314</sup> The support of that doctrine is the fact that Pharaoh came up with it, and he is its ultimate authority. I wonder why he did not openly attribute it to him. This would be in keeping with his statement about the doctrine of the leaders of the Community of Muḥammad ﷺ – who contravened his beliefs in the matters of dimensionality and direction and whom he counted among the Jahmiyya – that it came from Labīd ibn al-Aṣ‘am, the Jew who cast a spell on the Prophet ﷺ.<sup>315</sup>

<sup>313</sup> Mūsā’s reply in the next verse is: *{He said: Lord of the Heavens and the earth and all that is between them, if you had but sure belief}* (26:24).

<sup>314</sup> This is identical to Qāḍī Ibn al-‘Arabī al-Mālikī’s flaying of the anthropomorphists as those whose imām is Pharaoh: “Your conclusion shows that you are indeed the followers of Pharaoh, who believed that the Creator lies in a certain direction, and so he desired to climb up to Him on a ladder. He congratulates you for being among his followers and he is your imām!” Ibn al-‘Arabī, *‘Āriḍat al-Aḥwadhī* (2:235).

<sup>315</sup> Narrated from ‘Āisha by al-Bukhārī, Muslim, and in the *Sunan* and *Musnads*. Labīd is

71 [51] He concluded his review of the noble verses which he produced as proofs with the sayings of Allāh ﷻ: {*A sending-down (tanzīl) from the Wise, the Owner of Praise*} (41:42) and {*Sent down from your Lord in truth*} (6:114).<sup>316</sup> In neither of these two verses is there any mention of a Throne (‘*arsh*), or a Seat of Authority (*kursī*), or a heaven, or an earth. All that is mentioned is the sending-down and no more. I have no idea from what evidence the impostor inferred them. One does not infer the heaven from the sending-down, since the latter can be from the heaven or from somewhere else.

72 Indeed, how can one infer from the sending-down of the Qur’ān a descent (*nuzūl*) which consists in displacement from above to a lower point? The Arabs certainly do not conceive of such displacement in relation to words, whether the word is an accident (‘*araḍ*) or not.<sup>317</sup> Just as they apply “descent” to mean displacement, they apply it to mean otherwise also. This agrees with what was mentioned in the Book of Allāh: {*And We sent down iron, wherein is mighty power*} (57:25) and {*He has sent down for you of cattle eight kinds*} (39:6). No one sighted a piece of iron coming down airborne from the sky,<sup>318</sup> nor a camel gliding down from the heaven to the earth. Therefore, just as he identified as the source of Jahmī doctrine by the scholars, cf. Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya wal-Nihāya* (9:382, 10:21). By categorizing the Ash’arīs together with the Jahmiyya, Ibn Taymiyya in his *Fatāwā* (and Ibn al-Qayyim in *al-Nūniyya*) purports to cast the leading authorities of *Ahl al-Sunna* as Jewish infidels. See below, n. 343, 376 and 378. He followed in this Ibn Ḥazm’s rabidly anti-Ash’arī stance cf. al-Dhahabī, *Siyar A’lām al-Nubalā’* (Fikr ed. 13:131) and Ibn al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfi’iyya al-Kubrā* (3:384-385, 399-423; 4:131-132, 406-416).

<sup>316</sup> *Hamawiyya* (p. 217) = *Majmū’ al-Fatāwā* (5:13).

<sup>317</sup> I.e. whether words are the created words of human beings or the Divine uncreated Speech, in both cases they do not move about in space. And Allāh knows best.

<sup>318</sup> Iron does come down from the sky according to the theory of nucleosynthesis, invisibly to the naked eye. Nevertheless, this is not what verse 57:25 means since the “sending down” means the same Divine act of creation as in 39:6 as per Ibn Jahbal’s demonstration.

allowed that “descent” here means other than displacement from high to low, let him allow it there also.

This is the last of the evidence he produced from the Glorious Book. He had claimed, first of all, that he but said what Allāh ﷻ said, and that the verses that he mentioned were proofs to that effect either as an explicit stipulation (*naṣṣan*) or as a literal meaning (*zāhīran*). If the reader considers this claim of his [52] then carefully scrutinizes what we said, examining these verses one by one, he will not find in them a single word which conforms with what he claimed – neither as an explicit statement, nor as a literal meaning. *A fortiori*, every matter after the Book of Allāh ﷻ is subject to falsification.

73





The Fallacy of His  
“Proofs From the Sunna”

He then produced as a proof from the Sunna the ḥadīth of the Prophet’s ﷺ Ascension (*al-Mi‘rāj*).<sup>319</sup> But at no point in the ḥadīth of the Ascension does it literally say that Allāh ﷻ is above the heaven or the Throne. There is not one word in the ḥadīth to that effect! He did not even attempt to quote the ḥadīth of the Ascent nor show with clarity the supposed proof so that we could answer him on it. If he had clearly shown the place of his inference, we would have let him know the clear answer to it.<sup>320</sup>

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<sup>319</sup> *Ḥamawīyya* (p. 218) = *Majmū‘ al-Fatāwā* (5:13). “If it is asked: Does the event of *Mi‘rāj* indicate that the Exalted Who is worshipped is in the above direction, since He raised him ﷺ up in the direction of aboveness? The answer is: There is no such indication in it. Rather, the Pre-Eternal One does not have a ‘towards’ nor a limit (*laysa lahu naḥwun wa-lā ḥadd*). Nor is there any link (*ittiṣāl*) between Him and creatures, nor any separation (*infiṣāl*) from them. Being in a place with relation to Him is an absurd impossibility (*muḥāl*). He was – Exalted is He! – when there was no place, and He is now exactly as He ever was. He is the One Whom no injury overtakes and to Whom no distance applies.” Al-Qushayrī, *al-Mi‘rāj* (p. 70). See also al-Mālikī’s comments in *Wa-Huwa bil-Ufuqī al-A‘lā*, chapter titled “*al-Mi‘rāj wa-Shubhat al-Makān*” etc. (p. 246-251).

<sup>320</sup> Much of *taj̄sīm* thrives on a similar imprecision with regard to the evidence. Instead of being provided with clear proofs, the reader is tasked with imagining them himself through the anthropomorphic grid. This process can be observed in page after page of Ibn Taymiyya’s discourse on the Divine Attributes.

75 Then he adduced as a proof the descent of the angels from the Divine Presence.<sup>321</sup> The answer to this is that the descent of the angels from the heaven is only due to the fact that the heaven is their abode. As for their being-in-the-Divine-Presence (*al-'indiyya*), it does not indicate that Allāh ﷻ is in the heaven. For it is also said, concerning human Messengers: "They come from Allāh" (*innahum min 'ind Allāh*), although they did not descend from the heaven. This said, "being in the presence of Allāh ﷻ" may mean superlative honor and eminence. Allāh said: {*Lo! he [Dāwūd] had access to Our presence and a happy journey's end*} (38:25). 'Ind is also used in another sense, as the Prophet ﷺ said, quoting his Lord: "I am according to ('ind) My servant's opinion of Me."<sup>322</sup>

76 Then he mentioned the ascent of the angels once more,<sup>323</sup> apparently strengthening his spine and raising his hopes with the wording {*unto their Lord*} (6:38, 6:51, 6:108) where "unto" (*ilā*) presumably signifies arrival at one's destination in the sense of crossing a distance. This tacit assumption of his shows that he does not speak the language of the Arabs. For the Arabs do not understand distance except as that through which bodies move, whereas he claims they do not say that. Also, the Intimate Friend (*al-Khalīl*) ﷺ of Allāh ﷻ said: {*I am going unto my Lord*} (37:99) but this, by general agreement, is not in the sense of arrival which the impostor meant. How then does he dare bring up such a meaning in relation to the Book of Allāh as would not be acceptable even for a lone-narrated report?

<sup>321</sup> *Ḥamawīyya* (p. 218) = *Majmū' al-Fatāwā* (5:13).

<sup>322</sup> Narrated from Abū Hurayra by al-Bukhārī, Muslim, al-Tirmidhī, and Aḥmad; and from Wāthila ibn al-Asqa' by Ibn Ḥibbān (2:401-405 §633-639), al-Ṭabarānī in *al-Kabīr* (22:210) and *al-Awsaṭ*, and others.

<sup>323</sup> *Ḥamawīyya* (p. 218) = *Majmū' al-Fatāwā* (5:13).

Then he mentioned the saying of the Prophet ﷺ: "Do you not trust me when I am trusted by the one/those who is/are in the heaven (*man fīl-samāʾ*), and news from him/them comes to me morning and evening?"<sup>324</sup> 77

The meaning of *man fīl-samāʾ* is not Allāh Almighty, nor did the Prophet ﷺ mention that it was. He did not specify Allāh ﷻ. How then did the impostor decide that what was meant by *man* is not [53] the angels?<sup>325</sup> For they are the greatest of all creatures in knowledge and the most apprised of the nearness of Allāh ﷻ. They know well that the Prophet ﷺ is trusted, and he holds that rank among them. Let the impostor know that there is nothing in the ḥadīth to contradict this, nor is there anything in it to support what he claimed!<sup>326</sup> 78

Then he mentioned the ḥadīth of the invocation for healing (*ruqya*): "Our Lord, Allāh, in the heaven hallowed be Your Name! Your command comes to pass in the heaven and the earth, just as sustenance from You is in the heaven."<sup>327</sup> Provided 79

<sup>324</sup> Narrated from Abū Saʿīd al-Khudrī by al-Bukhārī and Muslim. *Ḥamawīyya* (p. 218-219) = *Majmūʿ al-Fatāwā* (5:13). See the Sunnī Imāms' explanations of the words "in the heaven" *supra*, note 296.

<sup>325</sup> Cf. §51 above.

<sup>326</sup> Ibn Ḥajar said: "Al-Kirmānī (d. 668) said: 'The literal meaning of {the one who is in the heaven} is not meant, for Allāh is transcendent beyond indwelling a place. However, since the direction of elevation is nobler than any other direction, Allāh predicated it to Himself to indicate the loftiness of His Essence and Attributes.' Others than al-Kirmānī addressed in similar terms the expressions that came down concerning aboveness (*fawqīyya*)." *Fatḥ al-Bārī* (1959 ed. 13:412). See the discussion on aboveness in our article, "The Ḥadīth of the Mountain Goats" in the *Sunna Notes* series.

<sup>327</sup> A very weak ḥadīth because of its narrator Ziyāda ibn Muḥammad al-Miṣrī who is "discarded" (*matrūk*). Narrated from Abū al-Dardā' by Abū Dāwūd, al-Ṭabarānī in *al-Kabīr*, al-Ḥākim (1:344 and 4:218 with a very weak chain as indicated by al-Dhahabī), and al-Bayhaqī in *al-Asmāʾ* (al-Ḥāshidī ed. 2:327 §892) thus: The Prophet ﷺ said: "Whoever among you is afflicted by something or is told by his brother of the latter's affliction, let him say: 'Our Lord, Allāh, in the heaven hallowed be Your Name! Your command comes to pass in the heaven and the earth. As Your mercy is in the heaven, let it be on earth. Forgive us our trespasses and our sins. Verily You are the Lord of the Righteous.

that this ḥadīth is authentic, then what the Prophet ﷺ mentioned is: “Our Lord, in the heaven hallowed be Your Name.” He did not stop after “in the heaven.” On what basis, therefore, should we stop after it and make “hallowed be Your Name” a new clause? Did the Prophet ﷺ do this or order it?

80 Accordingly, the impostor finds no other issue but to say: “The Name of Allāh ﷻ is hallowed both in the heaven and the earth, so why specify heaven?” But we also ask him: Why did you yourself specify the heaven in your argument?

81 Further, what is the meaning of “hallowed” (*taqaddasa*)? If it is a declaration of Transcendence (*tanzīh*), then that is neither in a heaven nor on earth. For the declaration of Transcendence is the negation of defects – meaning something unrelated to man-giness and dust. The meaning would be that creatures hallow [Him] and declare [His] Transcendence. There is no doubt that the inhabitants of the heaven absolutely all declare His Transcendence, just as there is no doubt that some among the inhabitants of the earth do not. Instead, the latter set up rivals for Him and describe Him with what does not befit His Majesty. Therefore, the distinction of “the heaven” in relation to the hallowing is because of the distinction of the totality of its inhabitants in declaring Divine Transcendence. Allāh ﷻ singles Himself out in His sovereignty on the Day of Judgment, without any of those who imagined that they possessed sovereignty, and says: {*Owner of the Day of Judgment*} (1:4). Similarly, He said, after the

Send down a mercy from Your mercies and a cure from Your cure on this ailment.’ Then he will be cured.” Aḥmad (17:183 §23839) and al-Ḥākim (4:243) narrate something similar, *mursal* from Faḍāla ibn ‘Ubayd al-Anṣārī. All these narrations have weak or very weak chains, as does al-Nasā’ī’s from Faḍāla from Abū al-Dardā’ in the *Sunan al-Kubrā* (6:257) and ‘*Amal al-Yāwm wal-Layla*. Al-Nawawī left it out of the *Adhkār* while Ibn al-Qaysarānī included it in his index of forgeries, *Tadhkirat al-Mawḍū’āt* (§756). *Ḥamawīyya* (p. 220-221) = *Majmū’ al-Fatāwā* (5:13).

destruction of those who claimed sovereignty and wealth: {*Whose is the sovereignty this Day? It belongs to Allāh, the One, the Almighty*} (40:16).

Then this impostor repeated what he said from the start until he stated: "Therefore, let one say: 'Our Lord Who is in the heaven.'" [54] He said this, stopping at the Prophet's ﷺ words "in the heaven." I ask, did any of the Scholars of Islām say or hold that it was permissible to do such a thing? Or is this anything other than a deluded suggestion that the master of Prophets ﷺ actually said: "Our Lord is Allāh Who is in the heaven"?<sup>328</sup> 82

Concerning the ḥadīth of the mountain goats (*ḥadīth al-aw'āl*) and its wording whereby "the Throne is above all this, and Allāh is above all this,"<sup>329</sup> this is a narration with which they frequently deceive the common people by claiming that they only say what the ḥadīth says. They inject it into their rhetoric and do not leave a single propaganda-session of theirs (*da'āwī-him*) except that they grace it with it. We shall make it very clear that they do not, in fact, subscribe to a single letter of it, nor do they have a firm basis upon which they can say that Allāh is literally above the Throne. On the contrary, they contradict that proposition. 83

<sup>328</sup> See below, §120-126.

<sup>329</sup> A weak ḥadīth narrated from al-'Abbās ibn 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib by al-Tirmidhī (*hasan gharīb*), Abū Dāwūd, and Ibn Mājah, Aḥmad (2:375-376 §1770-1771) and Abū Ya'lā in his *Musnad* (12:75 §6713), al-Hākim (2:288, 2:378, 2:501), Ibn Abī 'Āsim, *al-Sunna* (p. 253 §577), al-Ājurri, *al-Shari'a* (p. 297-298 §674-676), al-Bayhaqī, *Asmā'* (2:285 §847, 2:316 §882), Ibn Khuzayma in *al-Tawḥīd* (p. 102), and Ibn al-Jawzī in *al-'Ilal al-Mutanāhiya* (1:23-25 §5-6). *Ḥamawīyya* (p. 221-223) = *Majmū' al-Fatāwā* (5:13-14). See "The Ḥadīth of the Mountain Goats" in our *Sunna Notes* series.



## CHAPTER THREE

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### Parenthesis: His Understanding of the Witness (*ma'iyya*) and Height of Allāh ﷻ

What makes their contradiction manifest is the conclusion of the impostor's discourse, which we quote by jumping ahead: 84

Let no one think that this contradicts the literal (*ẓāhir*) meaning of the saying of Allāh: {*And He is with you wheresoever you may be*} (57:4) or that of the Prophet's ﷺ saying: "Whenever one of you stands to pray, [let him know that] verily, Allāh is in front of him,"<sup>330</sup> and the like. That would be an obvious mistake. For Allāh is both literally with us (*Allāh ma'anā ḥaqīqatan*) and literally above the Throne (*fawqa al-'arshi ḥaqīqatan*) [!].<sup>331</sup> He has coupled (*jama'a*) the two facts

<sup>330</sup> Narrated from Ibn 'Umar by al-Bukhārī and Muslim. The continuation of the ḥadīth states, "Therefore let no one spit in front of him in prayer." Al-Khaṭṭābī said, as cited by al-Bayhaqī, *Asmā'* (Kawtharī ed. p. 465-466; Hāshidī ed. 2:397-399) and al-Nawawī, *Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* (5:38): "Meaning, the direction which Allāh has enjoined upon him to face in prayer is before his face." Al-Bayhaqī, *op. cit.*: "Meaning, the reward of Allāh ﷻ for that worshipper descends upon him from the direction he is facing." Ibn Ḥajar, *Fath al-Bārī* (1989 ed. 1:669): "The ḥadīth also constitutes a refutation of those who say that Allāh ﷻ is on the Throne 'in person.'" Cf. al-'Irāqī, *Tarḥ al-Tathrib* (2:380-386).

<sup>331</sup> This is a leitmotiv of Ibn Taymiyya. Elsewhere in his *Fatāwā* he states: "Allāh is with us in reality, and He is above His Throne in reality (*Allāhu ma'ana ḥaqīqatan wa huwa fawqa al-'arshi ḥaqīqatan*)[...]. Allāh is with His creation in reality and He is above His

together by saying: {He it is Who created the heavens and the earth in six days, then He established Himself over the Throne. He knows all that enters the earth and all that emerges therefrom and all that comes down from the sky and all that ascends therein; and He is with you (ma'akum) wheresoever you may be. And Allāh is Seer of what you do} (57:4).<sup>332</sup>

85 The impostor then blurted this out with his own mouth, without any concealment or hesitation: "Allāh ﷻ has therefore informed us that He is above the Throne and is with us wherever we are, just as the Prophet ﷺ said in the ḥadīth of the mountain goats: 'And Allāh is above the Throne and He knows what you do.'"<sup>333</sup>

86 The reader can see that this impostor has claimed that Allāh ﷻ is "above the Throne in reality" and has produced as his proof the verse: {Then He established Himself over the Throne} (57:4), construing it as a statement from Allāh ﷻ that He is above the Throne. Whereas [55] any person of sound intellect and upright mind knows that the wording {established Himself over the Throne} is not literally synonymous with the wording "above the Throne." We demonstrated that previously.<sup>334</sup>

87 Nor is there anything in the verse indicating the coupling (*al-jam'*) which he claimed [*i.e.* "both above the Throne and with us"], nor did he explain the concept by which this coupling provides a proof. All he did was to quote a verse from the Book of Allāh ﷻ – one does not know whether he memorized it or copied it from a volume of the Qur'ān. Then he compared the Throne in reality (*Allāhu ma'a khalqihī ḥaqīqatan wa-huwa sawqa al-'arshī ḥaqīqatan*)!<sup>332</sup> *Majmū' al-Fatāwā* (5:103).

<sup>332</sup> *Hamawīyya* (p. 518-519) = *Majmū' al-Fatāwā* (5:102-103).

<sup>333</sup> *Hamawīyya* (p. 519) = *Majmū' al-Fatāwā* (5:103). None of the more than twenty-three versions of the ḥadīth has the wording "Allāh is above the Throne" except al-Ājurri's in *al-Sharī'a* (p. 298 §676). See note 329 above and the article, "The Ḥadīth of the Mountain Goats" in our *Sunna Notes* series.

<sup>334</sup> Cf. *supra*, §54 to §65.



probative force of the verse in question with the ḥadīth of the mountain goats – in his own words – “just as the Prophet ﷺ said: And Allāh is above the Throne.” But the reader can see that there is nothing in this ḥadīth indicating [His] being-with-us (*al-ma‘iyya*), nor even the least mention of the word “with” (*ma‘*) to begin with.

He said:

If “with” is used in the absolute sense, then its literal meaning in the Arabic language is none other than “association” (*al-muqārana*) in the absolute sense, without necessity of contact or being-alongside, whether from the right or from the left.<sup>335</sup> When “with” is restricted to a given meaning, then it stands for association within that meaning. For example, it is said: “All during our trip the moon was with us and the stars were with us.”<sup>336</sup> It is also said: “These effects are with us,” in the sense that they accompany you, even if they are located above your head. Therefore, Allāh is not with His creation

<sup>335</sup> This premise is at noticeable variance with the definitions of the lexicographers and grammarians which suggest materiality as the fundamental tenor of such association. Among the lexicographers, al-Fayrūzābādī in *al-Qāmūs al-Muḥīṭ* gives the two primary meanings of *ma‘a* as the conjoining or combining of something with something (*damm al-shay’ ilā al-shay’*) and accompaniment (*al-muṣāḥaba*), both of which suggest “contact or being-alongside,” while Ibn Manzūr in *Lisān al-‘Arab* states an identical definition: “A word which combines something with something else, it is a noun which means companionship” (*kalimatun taḍammu al-shay’a ilā al-shay’i wa-hiya ismun ma‘ nāhu al-ṣuḥba*). Among the grammarians, al-Mālaqī (d. 702) in *Raṣf al-Mabānī* (p. 394) states that its meaning is “accompaniment” (*al-muṣāḥaba*), while al-Murādī (d. 724) in *al-Janā al-Dānī* (p. 306) states it as “a noun for the place or time of the act of accompaniment according to whatever befits the construct” (*ismun li-makān al-iṣṭihāb aw waqtih ‘alā ḥasab mā yaliq bil-mudāf ilayh*). Ibn Taymiyya’s deviation from these definitions is exposed by Ibn Jahbal (§98).

<sup>336</sup> Another leitmotiv of Ibn Taymiyya, used in his *‘Aqida Wāsiṭiyya* and elsewhere, where he compares Allāh Most High to the moon and the sun in order to prove that the reading of the being-with-us of Allāh to mean “with His knowledge” is a literal and not a figurative interpretation. Cf. his discussion of the verses of *ma‘iyya* (57:4, 58:7, 20:46, 9:40 etc.) §84-97. Ibn Jahbal then refutes these views (§98-103).

except in reality, and He is not above His Throne except in reality. This said, “being-with-something” has different stipulations according to context. Allāh said: {*He knows all that enters the earth and all that emerges therefrom and all that comes down from the sky and all that ascends therein; and He is with you wheresoever you may be. And Allāh is seer of what you do*} (57:4). The literal meaning of this discourse indicates that the stipulation of this “being-with” and its requirement is that He is aware of you and knows about you. Hence, the meaning of the *Salafs* statement: “He is with them in His knowledge.” And that is both the letter of the text and its real sense (*ẓāhir al-khiṭāb wa-ḥaqīqatuhu*).<sup>337</sup>

89 He continued:

Similarly, this applies to the sayings of Allāh ﷻ: {*There is no secret conference of three but He is their fourth, nor of five but He is their sixth, nor of less than that or more but He is with them wheresoever they may be*} (58:7), [56] {*Grieve not. Lo! Allāh is with us*} (9:40), {*Lo! Allāh is with those who keep their duty unto Him and those who are doers of good*} (16:128), {*Lo! I am with you twain, Hearing and Seeing*} (20:46). A boy’s father may say to him from the top of the roof: “Do not be afraid, I am with you!” These are all cases of “being-with” that dictate stipulations according to context.<sup>338</sup>

90 Let the observer understand well the manner of this impostor in the preceding instances and note the glibness of his language in promoting his goals.<sup>339</sup>

<sup>337</sup> *Hamawiyya* (p. 519-520) = *Majmū’ al-Fatāwā* (5:103).

<sup>338</sup> *Hamawiyya* (p. 520-521) = *Majmū’ al-Fatāwā* (5:104).

<sup>339</sup> Ibn Jahbal points to Ibn Taymiyya’s mixing together true premises (cf. al-Junayd’s and al-Nūrī’s explanations of *ma’iyya* above, §27 and n. 269) and false ones (cf. §88, §86) in order to reach outlandish conclusions.

Then he said: “There is a difference between ‘being-with’ on the one hand and, on the other, what is essentially understood from its meaning, which varies according to different contexts.”<sup>340</sup> Let the observer understand this sentence which is neither in Arabic nor in a non-Arabic language. Glory to Him Who is glorified in various tongues! 91

Then he said: “The term ‘with’ has been used in different places of the Book and the Sunna, each place dictating something which the other did not dictate.” These are his exact words. “Therefore,” he said, “either the proofs that ‘with’ provides differ according to these different contexts, or they form a combined single value shared by all its contexts, even if each one differs from the other in something specific.” Go then and understand this impostor’s subdivisions and circumvolutions! Then he said: “In either case, its exigence (*muqtaḍāhā*) is never that the Divine Essence be intermixed with creation in order that one must say: it is diverted from its literal meaning.”<sup>341</sup> 92

Then he said further down: 93

Whoever realizes that ‘with’ is used in construct with [the name for] every different kind of creature – just as, for example, lordship is used in construct with [the name for] every different kind of creature – while *istiwā’* over something is

<sup>340</sup> *Ḥamawiyya* (p. 521) = *Majmū’ al-Fatāwā* (5:104).

<sup>341</sup> *Ḥamawiyya* (p. 521) = *Majmū’ al-Fatāwā* (5:104). Ibn Qudāma similarly claimed that the literal meaning (*zāhir*) of “with” in such verses was “with His knowledge,” “with His protection,” “with His support,” etc. so that these meanings can no longer be called figurative interpretations (*ta’wīl*). Then he conceded that even if they were, they are only in reiteration of the *Salaf’s ta’wīl*. *Dhamm al-Ta’wīl* (p. 43 §93-97). Thus the Ḥanbalīs concede that the *Salaf* practiced *ta’wīl* in certain cases, although they prefer not to give it that name. To the Ash‘arīs, these are all clearcut cases of figurative interpretation (*ta’wīl*) without need for apology and confirmed by Arabic usage, as indicated by Ibn Jahhal.

used for the Throne and nothing but the Throne;<sup>342</sup> and that Allāh is described with literal height (*'uluw*) and aboveness (*fawqiyya*), never lowness (*sufūl*) nor belowness (*taḥṭiyya*) – neither real nor figurative – will realize that the Qur'ān means just what it means (*al-Qur'ān 'alā mā huwa 'alayh*) without distortion (*tahrīf*).<sup>343</sup>

- 94 Let the observer understand well these dogmatic premises [57], these composed, assertive expressions, as restricting *istiwā'* to the Throne is something no rational person ever held save an ignorant one!
- 95 Then he said: "Whoever imagines that Allāh is in the heaven in the sense that the heaven surrounds and contains Him is a liar if he claims to report it from someone else and misguided if he believes it of his Lord. We never heard anyone understand it thus from those words, nor saw anyone report it from anyone else."<sup>344</sup> Let the observer be notified that understanding can be heard!

<sup>342</sup> Compare this with Imām Aḥmad's lofty explanation of *istiwā'* whereby "[Allāh] is above everything and He is exalted over everything but He specified the Throne because of its particular significance which makes it different from everything else, as the Throne is the best of all things and the most elevated of them." Ibn Abī Ya'īlā, *Ṭabaqāt al-Ḥanābila* (2:296-297). Cf. below, note 371.

<sup>343</sup> *Ḥamawīyya* (p. 523) = *Majmū' al-Fatāwā* (5:105-106). This is a rhetorical platitude, as everything "means just what it means" anyway. The actual aim here is to bring up the word *tahrīf*, the Qur'ānic word used in relation to those who distorted the Scripture revealed to them (2:75, 4:46, 5:13, 5:41). By this device Ibn Taymiyya assimilates figurative interpretation to the act of Christian and Jewish interpolators. This is similar to his conflating the interpretation (*ta'wīl*) of Ash'arīs with the nullification (*ta'ṭīl*) of Mu'tazilīs and their subsets or his reference to Labīd; the important thing for him being to represent Ash'arīs as non-Sunnīs. This is the method revived by Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb and parroted by the "Salafīs" in our time.

<sup>344</sup> *Ḥamawīyya* (p. 523) = *Majmū' al-Fatāwā* (5:106).

He said:

If all Muslims were asked whether they understand from the words of Allāh and those of His Prophet that “Allāh is in the heaven” in the sense that it contains Him, each one of them would hasten to say: “Such a thing would have never occurred to us.” If this is the case, then it is abnormal to make the literal meaning of an expression mean something absurd which no one thinks it means, and then turn to interpret it figuratively. Rather, the Muslims hold that Allāh is in the heaven and that He is on the Throne in one and the same sense, for by the heaven is meant nothing other than height.<sup>345</sup> The meaning is therefore that Allāh is in the heights, not at the bottom.<sup>346</sup>

Thus spoke the impostor. Let the observer read and reread the above enormity (*fāl-yuthni al-nāziru ‘alā hādhihi bil-khanāšir*) and bite upon it with his very jaws, and know with certainty that the folk {ruin their houses with their own hands and the hands of the believers} (59:2). He said:

97

The Muslims have long since known that His *kursī* – exalted is He! – encompasses the heaven and the earth, and that the *kursī*, in comparison to the *‘arsh*, is like a ring thrown into a desert,<sup>347</sup> and that the Throne is but one of the creations of

<sup>345</sup> *Bal ‘inda al-muslimin annalāha fīl-samā’ wa-huwa ‘alā al-‘arshi wāhidun idh al-samā’u innamā yurādu bihā al-‘uluw.* This axiom of Ibn Taymiyya becomes the focus of Ibn Jahbal’s subsequent response cf. below, §109-224.

<sup>346</sup> *Ḥamawiyya* (p. 523-524) = *Majmū’ al-Fatāwā* (5:106).

<sup>347</sup> Narrated with very weak chains as part of a long ḥadīth from Abū Sa‘īd al-Khudrī by Ibn Ḥibbān (2:77 §361 *isnād ḍa‘if jiddan*), Abū Nu‘aym (1:166-168), al-Bayhaqī in the *Sunan* (9:4), and Abū al-Shaykh in *al-‘Aẓama* (2:547, 2:570, etc.) but Ibn Ḥajar in *Fath al-Bārī* (13:411) said Sa‘īd ibn Manṣūr narrated it in his *Sunan* (3:951 §425) with a sound *mursal* chain from Mujāhid – a *maqṭū’* report.

Allāh unrelated to <other than><sup>348</sup> His Might and Magnificence. How then can anyone imagine, after all this, that something created can confine or contain Him? Allāh said: {*I shall crucify you "in" (fī) the trunks of palm trees*} (20:71), and {*Do but travel "in" the earth*} (3:137, 16:36), [both] in the sense of "on." There are other such examples, and this an Arabic idiom used in the real sense, not figuratively. [58] This is well-known by those who know the literal meanings of words (*ḥaqā'iq ma' nā al-ḥurūf*), and the fact that they<sup>349</sup> are at par (*mutawāṭi'a*) for the most part.<sup>350</sup>

Here ends his reasoning.

<sup>348</sup> *Illā*. This word was apparently blanked out from the original text of the *Ḥamawīyya* as indicated in al-Tuwayjirī's critical apparatus and must have existed in some copies exclusively of others cf. below, §115-116. The *Majmū' al-Fatāwā* has "and that the Throne is but one of the creations of Allāh, not a pointer to His Might and Magnificence" (*lā nisbatan ilā qudratillāhi wa-'azamatih*) while al-Tuwayjirī amends it to read, "and that the Throne is but one of the creations of Allāh which has no relation to His Might and Magnificence" (*lā nisbata lahu ilā qudratillāhi wa-'azamatih*).

<sup>349</sup> *I.e.* literal meanings and the words that stand for them, a literalist creed applied by Ibn Taymiyya to the prepositions "with" (*ma'*), "over" (*'alā*), "above" (*fawq*) etc. See notes 335 and 341 above.

<sup>350</sup> *Ḥamawīyya* (p. 524) = *Majmū' al-Fatāwā* (5:106).

## CHAPTER FOUR

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### His Peculiar Understanding of “with,” “in,” “above” and “on”

First, we ask: What is the meaning of your statement: “The word ‘with’ (*ma‘*) in the Arabic language is for ‘association’ (*al-muqārana*) in the absolute sense, without contact or being-alongside?” What is “association?” If one does not understand, by that word, anything but automatic corporeality (*al-jismiyya*), then the purpose [of anthropomorphism] has been reached. And if one understands other than that, then let us know so, and see for yourself whether the Arabs understand corporeality from the word *muqārana* or not. 98

To his statement “When ‘with’ is restricted to a given meaning, it stands for ‘association’ within that meaning” we reply, who has decreed such a rule in such a case? 99

To his claim that in all these passages “association” denotes knowledge we reply, from where did you deduce this? If he says that he deduced it from the saying of Allāh: {*There is no secret conference of three but He is their fourth*} (58:7), claiming that this verse indicates “association” in the sense of knowledge, and claiming that the “association” is nevertheless real, we reply: You 100

have allowed yourself plenty of room to maneuver, so do the same for us! Know that just as the word “above” (*fawq*) is used for height in a certain direction, similarly, it is used for height in rank, authority, and sovereignty. The same applies with “establishment” (*istiwāʾ*). These dual senses go hand in hand, exactly as you said.<sup>351</sup>

101 Take, for example, the statements of Allāh: {*He is the Omnipotent over (fawq) His slaves*} (6:18, 6:61); {*The Hand of Allāh is above (fawq) their hands*} (48:10); in the mouth of Pharaoh’s people: {*We are in power over (fawq) them*} (7:127); and {*We have raised some of them above (fawq) others in rank*} (43:32). It is known that the direction of height is not meant here. Therefore, look into the matter a second time and say, also, that “above the Throne” [59] is in the sense of establishing dominion (*istilāʾ*).

102 The same applies with the ḥadīth of the mountain goats. Whatever you did with “with” (*maʿ*), do it with “above” (*fawq*) also. Bring out these meanings here as you have brought them out there, or else leave everything alone.

103 To his saying: “Whoever realizes that ‘with’ is used in construct with [the name of] every different kind of creature, just as, for example, ‘lordship’ is used in construct with [the name of] every different kind of creature, while *istiwāʾ* is over the Throne and nothing but the Throne,” we reply: Give us only a glimpse, in support of what you say, of a single person that uses “with” and knows – without evidence – all that you say. For you have certainly not established any proof for the above. All you did was to loudly assert a wording whereby *fawq* positively signifies *istiwāʾ* in the sense of height. I wonder, how do you know that “association” in the sense of “knowledge” is a literal sense,<sup>352</sup> and

<sup>351</sup> Cf. article, “The Ḥadīth of the Mountain Goats,” in our *Sunna Notes*.

<sup>352</sup> As opposed to a metaphorical sense.



that the verse of *istiwā'* over the Throne and the ḥadīth of the mountain goats point to the Attribute of Lordship as real aboveness? O Allāh, forgive me! Such knowledge can only come from miraculous unveiling (*kashf*)! Otherwise, the proofs which Allāh has brought forth to make known His Essence, His Attributes, and His Laws – of such proofs the impostor has not cited a single letter in support of whatever he claims. He has no firm foothold except in the abyss.

As for his saying that “Allāh is not described with lowliness nor belowness whether real or figurative” – O wonder! Whoever made such a claim in the first place that he should busy himself discussing it? 104

As for his saying further: “Whoever imagines that Allāh is in the heaven in the sense that the heaven surrounds and contains Him is a liar if he claims to report it from someone else and misguided if he believes it of his Lord.” O impostor! Say what you understand, and understand what you are saying. Address people rationally and in the speech of rational persons so that you will benefit them and benefit from them. If you yourself are trying to infer the meaning of direction from the word “in” (*fī*), and interpret it in its real sense, then is anything other than the quality of place understood from it, or some related meaning? And since this is the case, does any thinking person conceive of the quality of place as separate from the concept of surrounding – whether in part or in whole – or whatever presupposes it? Was this ever heard of? 105

Or [has anyone heard] of one who ventures that “in” is literally in a certain direction, but that neither containment nor encompassment, in part or in whole, is understood thereby? If your purpose is to have people suspend the use of their brains 106

so that you alone can speak while they imitate you blindly and acquiesce, then expect that one of those in charge of punishing [60] the violators of this Community will summon you for your act and convict you of wrong-doing!<sup>353</sup>

107 As for your saying: "If all Muslims were asked whether they understand from the words of Allāh and those of His Prophet that 'Allāh is in the heaven' in the sense that it contains Him, each one of them would hasten to say: 'Such a thing would have never occurred to us.'" We reply: What do you mean by the above? If you mean to say that this expression does not yield that meaning, then I defy you to ask an expert in the language of the Arabs about it.<sup>354</sup> He will certainly not confirm your claim that this expression does not yield that meaning, since "in" is a circumstantial preposition which, in its real or proper sense ('*alā ḥaqīqatihā*'), denotes direction.

108 But if you mean to say that rational minds reject such a representation of Allāh ﷻ, then we agree with you only in affirming the same, and in rejecting all that may falsely suggest imperfection with regard to Allāh Almighty.

109 As for your saying: "The Muslims hold that Allāh is in the heaven and that He is on the Throne in one and the same sense," you must not attribute that discourse to anyone besides yourself and those from whom you have received this disgraceful belief. Do not, through such speech, misrepresent the Muslims as perpetrating absurdities.

<sup>353</sup> This prediction proved true, as it was written before the series of trials and imprisonments to which Ibn Taymiyya was subjected until his death.

<sup>354</sup> Ibn Taymiyya believed himself a greater expert in the Arabic language than Sībawayh, for which the grammarian Abū Ḥayyān abandoned him cf. Ibn Ḥajar's notice on Ibn Taymiyya in *al-Durar al-Kāmina* (1:153).

## CHAPTER FIVE

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### His Understanding of the Heaven to Mean “the Height”

Then you used – as your proof that Allāh being “in the heaven” and His being “on the Throne” are one and the same sense – the claim that “by ‘the heaven’ is meant nothing other than height, meaning that Allāh is in the heights, not at the bottom.” Tell me: Did Allāh ﷻ, His Prophet ﷺ, or the First and Foremost among the Emigrants and Helpers ﷺ ever say such a thing as “Allāh is in the heights, not at the bottom?” 110

In fact, everything you said from the beginning of the introduction to the end, if it were conceded to you, its gist would be that Allāh ﷻ said of Himself that He established Himself over the Throne, and that Allāh ﷻ is above the Throne. As for the claim that by the heaven is meant the height, you were not so fortunate as to substantiate it with narrations from the authorities. 111

As for your saying: “The Muslims have long since known that His *kursī* encompasses the heaven and the earth, and that [61] the *kursī*, in comparison to the *‘arsh*, is like a ring thrown into a desert” – I wonder: if the ḥadīth of the mountain goats indicates 112

to you that Allāh ﷻ is above the Throne, then how do you reconcile it with the ascent of the angels to the heaven where Allāh is? And how can He be, at the same time, in the heaven in reality?

113 Perhaps you will say: "What is meant by the two is the direction of height, which reconciles the two." In this case I ask: After such a reconciliation (*tawfīq*) which is devoid both of Divine prescriptiveness (*tawqīf*) and success (*tawfīq*), how can you say that Allāh ﷻ is literally (*ḥaqīqatan*) in (*fī*) the heaven, and literally above (*fawq*) the heaven, and literally in (*fī*) the Throne, and literally on (*'alā*) the Throne?

114 Further, the real sense of "heaven" (*al-samā'*) is this visible phenomenon which one calls by its name without in the least thinking in terms of altitude (*al-sumū*). As for the derivation [*al-samā' < al-sumū*], then the heaven has no particular distinction for it over "the roof" or "the clouds."

115 Then there is your subsequent saying: "The Throne is but one of the creations of Allāh unrelated to other than the Might and Magnificence of Allāh." Our copy indeed states "unrelated to other than the Might and Magnificence of Allāh" (*lā nisbata lahu illā qudrat Allāh wa-'aẓamatahu*). If this is correct, then you have denied the existence of the Throne and claimed that "direction" is in fact "Might and Magnificence." Your words would then mean: "The direction of Allāh is His Might and Magnificence." Now you have become incoherent; and no one ever said this.

116 But if what you actually said was "unrelated to the Might of Allāh and His Magnificence" (*lā nisbata lahu illā qudratillāh wa-'aẓamatihi*), then you have spoken fairly and truly, for whoever said otherwise?<sup>355</sup> Upon my life! We have overhauled this passage for you and taught you how to improve it.

<sup>355</sup> I.e. the Throne, despite being the greatest of all creations, does not compare with Allāh's uncreated Attributes.

Then you said: "Can anyone imagine, after all this, that something created can confine or contain Him?" Precisely! And from where or what does all our trouble come if not from those who claim confinement or suggest it? 117

Then you said: "Allāh said: {I shall crucify you "in" (fī) the trunks of palm-trees} (20:71)." Have you not understood that placement in the sense of settledness (*al-tamakkunu al-istiqrārī*) definitely takes place on the crucifixion trees? So the placement of the crucified on the tree-trunk [62] is like a circumstantial placement (*katamakkun al-kā'in fīl-ẓarf*).<sup>356</sup> The same rule applies to the saying of Allāh ﷻ: {Do but travel "in" the earth} (3:137, 16:36). 118

What we have mentioned so far is a reply to the ḥadīth of the mountain goats,<sup>357</sup> the ḥadīth of the seizure of the soul,<sup>358</sup> and the ḥadīth of 'Abd Allāh ibn Rawāḥa رضي الله عنه.<sup>359</sup> 119

<sup>356</sup> *I.e.* it can never be compared with a Divine Attribute.

<sup>357</sup> See above, §83-87, 102-103, 112.

<sup>358</sup> "[...] The soul exits [the body] then is taken up to heaven and its gates are opened for it [...] until it ends up in the heaven where Allāh is (*al-samā al-lati fihā Allāh*)." Narrated from Abū Hurayra by Ibn Mājah and Aḥmad with a sound chain. Cited in Ibn Taymiyya, *Ḥamawīyya* (p. 226).

<sup>359</sup> A dubious report adduced by Ibn Taymiyya in his *Ḥamawīyya* (p. 227) that the Companion 'Abd Allāh ibn Rawāḥa رضي الله عنه pretended reciting to his wife, as if from the Qur'ān, the poetic verses: "I bear witness that the promise of Allāh is true and that the Fire is the abode of the disbelievers / and that the Throne hovers on top of the water and on top of the Throne the Lord of the worlds." Then the Prophet ﷺ supposedly heard of it and approved. Narrated by Ibn 'Asākir (28:112-115) with weak, broken (*munqaṭi'*) chains missing up to three links and/or containing liars or raconteurs (*ikhbārī*) cf. al-Dhahabī in his 'Uluw (Saqqāf ed. p. 202 §64=p. 42; not found in *Mukhtaṣar al-'Uluw*) and *Siyar* (Risāla ed. 1:238) while Ibn 'Abd al-Barr cites it without chain in *al-Istī'āb* (3:900-901=2:296) as well as Ibn Qudāma in *al-Mughnī* (9:314, 10:411) and *al-'Uluw* (p. 145-150) and Ibn al-Qayyim in his apology of anthropomorphism entitled *Ijtīmā' al-Juyūsh al-Islāmiyya* (p. 121-122). Al-Dāraquṭnī's version in his *Sunan* (1:121) does not contain any of the above wording nor does Ibn al-Jawzī's in *al-Adhkiyā'*. See also al-Kawtharī's comments in his marginalia on *al-Sayf al-Ṣaqil* (p. 125).

- 120 As for the report of Umayya ibn Abī Ṣalt and what he said in poetic verses:

*Give laud to Allāh for He deserves laud!  
Our Lord is in the heaven ever magnified!*

*(Majjidū-l-Lāha fahwa lil-majdi ahlu  
Rabbunā fīl-samā'i amsā kabīrā)*<sup>360</sup>

- 121 Our answer to the impostor is: If you narrate the above only up to “is in the heaven” without following up with “ever magnified,” then perhaps it will suggest exactly what you are claiming – except that both the meter and the rhyme will disappear! Therefore, since Umayya said “Our Lord is in the heaven ever magnified,” say, also, just what he said. In the latter case, one cannot tell whether it is as you said or rather as he said, namely, that Allāh is truly magnified in the heaven.

- 122 Now, if you say: “He is also magnified on earth, so why was the heaven singled out?” We reply: It is a kind of emphasis to which we have already referred.<sup>361</sup> Its meaning is that the glorification of the inhabitants of the heaven is greater than that

<sup>360</sup> Narrated without chain higher than al-Aṣma‘ī (*fl.* 216) by Ibn ‘Asākir (9:277) although Ibn Taymiyya in the *Ḥamawīyya* (p. 228-229) attempts to concatenate it with the sound narration from al-Sharīd ibn Suwayd in Muslim that Sharīd recited to the Prophet up to one hundred lines of poetry by Umayya. Ibn Ḥajar said in *al-Iṣāba* (1:133 §549): “There is no contest among the authorities in history that Umayya ibn Abī Ṣalt died an unbeliever.” Ibn al-‘Arabī said in *‘Ariḍat al-Aḥwadhī* (2:235): “They say: ‘What about Umayya ibn Abī al-Ṣalt who said: ‘Glory to Him Whom creatures are unable to know in the way He deserves to be known, Who is on His Throne, One and One Alone, Sovereign and Possessor over the Throne of Heaven, unto Whose Majesty faces are humbled and prostrate?’ and he had read the Torah, the Bible, and the Psalms.’ We say: It is just like you and your ignorance to cite as proof, first Pharaoh, then the discourse of a pre-Islamic Arab supported by the Torah and the Bible, which have been distorted and changed! And of all of the creation of Allāh, the Jews are the most expert in disbelief and in likening Allāh to creation.”

<sup>361</sup> See above, §80-81.

of those on earth. For there is none among the angels who makes sculptures out of stone for worship, nor are there any perennialists (*dahriyya*) among them, nor nullifiers-of-the-Attributes (*mu'atṭila*), nor anthropomorphists.

Umayya was addressing the Arab pagans who had taken Hubal, Manāt, al-Lāt, al-‘Uzzā, and other deities for worship, and the same Arabs knew that the inhabitants of the heaven were more knowledgeable than them. They even held in authority the utterances of the oracle who would seize from the *jinn* whatever news the latter pilfered from the angels, to which the oracle would add a hundred lies. Therefore, their belief in the angels goes without saying. This is not far-fetched nor is there any other definitive explanation of the poetic verse.<sup>362</sup> 123

[63] Then he said: “It must be obligatorily known that the Prophet ﷺ, who is conveying the call on behalf of Allāh, has imparted to his Community – who are summoned [to that call] – that Allāh ﷻ is on the Throne and that He is above the heaven.”<sup>363</sup> 124

We reply: This is not authentic in the explicit evidence. What the Prophet ﷺ imparted to his Community is that Allāh ﷻ established Himself over the Throne. That is what has been mass-transmitted from the conveyance of the Prophet ﷺ.<sup>364</sup> 125

<sup>362</sup> There is also a relevant narration in Abū Nu‘aym, *Dalā’il al-Nubuwwa* (p. 376-379 §275) containing the words: “Allāh – in the heaven is His Throne and on earth His dominion [...]”

<sup>363</sup> *Ḥamawīyya* (p. 231) = *Majmū’ al-Fatāwā* (5:15). This claim comes straight from ‘Uthmān ibn Sa‘īd al-Dārimī’s (d. 280) book against the Jahmiyya as shown in the following note.

<sup>364</sup> Al-Dhahabī reiterated this position in the *Siyar*: “In his book *al-Naqd* he [‘Uthmān ibn Sa‘īd al-Dārimī] said: ‘The Muslims all agree that Allāh is above His Throne, above His heavens.’ I say: The clearest thing on this topic is the saying of Allāh: {*The Merciful established Himself over the Throne*} (20:5). Therefore, let it pass as it came, just as we learned to do from the school of *Salaf*.” *Siyar* (10:643).

126 As for the reports to which this impostor is referring, they are solitary reports (*āḥād*) which do not command the authenticating authority of a massive gathering of narrators. There is no proof for him in such reports.<sup>365</sup> This is very clear to whoever has heard the Prophet's ﷺ words and construes them according to Arabic usage and linguistic precedents, without introducing foreign elements into them.

127 Then you said: "Just as Allāh has created innocent the totality of nations, both Arabs and non-Arabs, in the time of Ignorance and in Islām, except those whom the devils seduced away from innocence."<sup>366</sup> This talk is objectionable from beginning to end because it is tendentious and insidious.<sup>367</sup>

128 Then you said: "The *Salaf* have spoken, concerning this, what amounts to hundreds or thousands of statements if I were to gather them."<sup>368</sup> We reply: If you mean by *Salaf* the predecessors of those who liken Allāh to creation – as shown further in your discourse – then perhaps this is the case. But if by *Salaf* you mean the pious Predecessors of this Community, then no, not one letter nor the tip of a letter! We are going to follow your trail, passage by passage, topic by topic, with the Help of Allāh and His Might.

129 Then you said: "There is not, in the Book of Allāh, nor in the Sunna of His Messenger ﷺ, nor in the reports from any of the *Salaf* of the Community – whether the Companions or the Successors – a single letter that contradicts this, neither as an explicit text (*naṣṣ*), nor as a literal one (*zāhir*)."<sup>369</sup>

<sup>365</sup> Cf. "Lone-Narrator Reports" in volume I of our *Sunna Notes*.

<sup>366</sup> *Ḥamawīyya* (p. 231-232) = *Majmū' al-Fatāwā* (5:15).

<sup>367</sup> *I.e.* these are loaded terms by which Ibn Taymiyya depicts himself in optimal terms while demonizing those who contradict him.

<sup>368</sup> *Ḥamawīyya* (p. 232) = *Majmū' al-Fatāwā* (5:15).

<sup>369</sup> *Ibid.*



We reply: What you are claiming is not found anywhere in them, whether as an explicit text or a literal one.

You had begun by saying that you are merely repeating what Allāh ﷻ, His Prophet ﷺ, and the First and Foremost among the Emigrants and Helpers ﷺ said.<sup>370</sup> Then it became apparent that what you meant by “the First and Foremost among the Emigrant and Helpers” was the teachers of your doctrine. So you have divested the Ten [who were promised Paradise] and the veterans of Badr [64] and al-Ḥudaybiya from their foremostness as well as the Successors from their Successorship! Yet no less than Allāh has taken them all as Friends. {*Allāh knows best with whom to place His Message*} (6:124). 130

Then you said: “None of them ever said that Allāh ﷻ is not in the heaven (*fil-samā*), nor that He is not on the Throne (*‘alā al-‘arsh*), nor that He is in every place, nor that all places are the same in relation to Him,<sup>371</sup> nor that He is ‘neither inside the 131

<sup>370</sup> See above, §39 and §110.

<sup>371</sup> The belief of the *Hashwiyya* is that the greater the altitude, the nearer one is to Allāh. ‘Uthmān ibn Sa‘id al-Dārīmī al-Sijzī (d. 280) said in his *Naqd al-Jahmiyya* (Cairo, 1361/1942 p. 100): “Who told you that the top of the mountain is not closer to Allāh than its bottom? [...] The top of the minaret is closer to Allāh than its bottom.” Al-Kawtharī wrote in his *Maqālāt* (p. 314) “According to the author the tall man is closer to Allāh than the short one, and so is the one who flies a plane in comparison to those on the ground. The nearest to Him would then be the astronauts. However, this is contrary to the teaching of our religion, whereby the servant of Allāh is closest to Him when in prostration.” Al-Ash‘arī said: “He is above the Throne and the Heavens and above everything to the limits of the earth with an aboveness which does not bring Him nearer to the Throne and the Heavens, just as it does not make Him further from the earth. Rather, He is Highly Exalted above the Throne and the Heavens, just as He is Highly Exalted above the earth. Yet He is near to every entity and is nearer to [the worshipper] than his jugular vein and He witnesses everything.” Al-Ash‘arī, *al-Ibāna*, (Maḥmūd ed. 2:21= Şabbāgh ed. p. 35). This passage is missing in its entirety from the original 1321/1903 Hyderabad edition and the ‘Uyūn edition. The same meaning is reported from Imām Aḥmad. Abū al-Faḍl al-Tamīmī related that Imām Aḥmad said: “Allāh is ever Exalted (*‘ālī*) and Elevated (*rafi‘*) without beginning, before He created the Throne. He is above everything (*huwa fawqa kulli shay’*), and He is exalted over everything (*huwa al-‘ālī ‘alā kulli shay’*). He only specified the Throne because of its particular significance which makes it

world nor outside it nor connected (*muṭṭaṣil*) nor separate (*munfaṣil*).”<sup>372</sup>

132 We reply: you have overreached yourself in this claim and said something that lies beyond the compass of your knowledge. We have already mentioned to you sufficient material in the reports from Ja‘far al-Ṣādiq, al-Junayd, al-Shiblī, Ja‘far ibn Nuṣayr, and Abū ‘Uthmān al-Maghribī ﷺ.<sup>373</sup> If you cast aspersions on the veracity of our transmissions or on these Masters, then we also cast aspersions on the veracity of your transmissions, especially those reported from persons known to support your doctrine. For no one besides them supports your doctrine.

133 Furthermore, it is you who have said what Allāh ﷻ never said, nor His Messenger ﷺ, nor the First and Foremost among the Emigrant and Helpers, nor the Successors, nor the Teachers of the Community, who do not come up with fancies. None of them uttered one letter saying that Allāh ﷻ is in the direction of height. You have said and declared and discussed and understood that whatever was found to the effect that He is “in the heaven,” “above the heaven,” “on the Throne,” and “above the Throne,” actually all means the direction of height!<sup>374</sup> Tell us, who ever said such a thing? Did Allāh ﷻ say it, or His Prophet ﷺ, or the First and Foremost, or the excellent Successors? Then why do you try to intimidate us with gibberish? In Allāh is our Help!

different from everything else, as the Throne is the best of all things and the most elevated of them. Allāh ﷻ therefore praised Himself by saying that {*He established Himself over the Throne*} (20:4), that is, He exalted Himself over it (‘*alayhi ‘alā*). It is impermissible to say that He established Himself with a contact or a meeting with it. Exalted is Allāh above that! Allāh is not subject to change, substitution, nor limits, whether before or after the creation of the Throne.” Ibn Abī Ya‘lā, *Ṭabaqāt al-Ḥanābila* (2:296-297).

<sup>372</sup> *Ḥamawīyya* (p. 232-233) = *Majmū‘ al-Fatāwā* (5:15).

<sup>373</sup> See above, §25-34.

<sup>374</sup> See above, §96.

Then he produced as proof for the permissibility of sensory signaling (*al-ishāra al-ḥissiyya*) towards Allāh with fingers and the like, the sound report of the Prophet ﷺ words in the 'Arafāt sermon: "Have I not conveyed the Message?" To which they replied yes; whereupon he raised [65] his finger toward the heaven then pointed it at them saying: "O Allāh! Bear witness," and he did so more than once.<sup>375</sup> 134

But how does this ever prove that it is permissible to point to Him? Was anything reported from the Prophet ﷺ other than that he raised his finger and then pointed it at them? Is there in this any proof that when he raised his finger he was indicating the direction of Allāh ﷻ with it? To claim so only shows the extent to which talk about direction has seized hold of this man's mind. It has reached a point where, if he hears some difficult question about the laws of inheritance, or wills, or the rulings concerning menses, he will say: "This indicates direction!" 135

<sup>375</sup> Narrated from Jābir by Muslim, Abū Dāwūd, and Ibn Mājah. *Ḥamawīyya* (p. 233) = *Majmū' al-Fatāwā* (5:15). "He meant by this to take Allāh to witness over [the acknowledgment of] the people." Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Nihāya* (5:111). This is similar to the moving of the forefinger towards the Ka'ba in *tashahhud* in which the Muslim "proclaims *tawhīd* with his hand, his tongue, and his heart" (al-Nawawī). Other versions from Abū Bakrah al-Thaqafī, Ibn 'Umar, Abū Sa'id al-Khudrī, Ibn Mas'ūd, Jābir, Abū Ghādiya, and others in the *Ṣaḥīḥayn*, *Sunan*, and Aḥmad omit mention of the raising of the finger toward the heaven.



## CHAPTER SIX

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### His Rethoric Against the *Mutakallimūn*

Then he committed his foulest enormity and darkest deed yet. He said:

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If the truth really is what those aforementioned deniers<sup>376</sup> are saying, who use those expressions and similar ones<sup>377</sup> quite apart from what is understood from the Qur'ān and Sunna explicitly or literally, then how can it be possible for Allāh, for His Prophet ﷺ, and for the Elite of the Community to speak constantly in explicit and literal utterances that contradict the truth? How can they not ever disclose the truth in which it is obligatory to believe, nor ever point to it, neither explicitly nor literally? How can they leave it to the Nabateans among the Persians and Byzantines and to the seedlings of the Hindus<sup>378</sup> to expound true Islamic doctrine for the

<sup>376</sup> I.e. the scholars of *kalām*. Ibn Taymiyya imitated Ibn Ḥazm in deliberately conflating the Ash'arīs with non-Sunnīs and non-Muslims as we pointed out (n. 220, 315 and 343).

<sup>377</sup> I.e. in figurative interpretation.

<sup>378</sup> The Tuwayjirī edition of the *Ḥamawīyya* has "the Jews" instead of "the Hindus" but does have Ibn Taymiyya's comparison of the Muslim theologians to "the Hindus and Greeks, the heirs of the Zoroastrians and pagans, the wayward Jews and Christians, the

benefit of the Community and represent it as the belief that is obligatory for every legally responsible and wise person?

Truly, if this were the case, then obligatory belief would be what those artificial scholars of *kalām* say, who became the slaves of their minds, and the habitual rejection, on the basis of their rational guidelines, of whatever the Book and the Sunna show explicitly or literally. In that case it would be preferable to leave the people without the Book or the Sunna! That would be of greater guidance and benefit to them in such a scenario. Nay, the mere existence of the Book and the Sunna would be a source of pure harm [66] in the foundations of the Religion! For the truth of the matter, according to what they say, would be thus: "O host of the servants of Allāh! Do not seek to know Allāh Almighty, nor whatever behooves Him of Attributes – those He may not possess and those He must possess – from the Book and the Sunna and the Predecessors of the Community. Rather, see for yourselves. Then, whatever you find unsuitable for Him according to your wits, do not describe Him as such."<sup>379</sup>

137 Then he said:

They are two parties. Most of them say: "Whatever your minds cannot prove firmly, deny it!" while some of them say: "Neither confirm nor deny it." They say: "Whatever the guideline (*qiyās*) of your minds rejects and {*over which you*

Sabeans, and their likes [...] the Brahmins, the philosophers – the pagan ones, the Zoroastrians, and some of the Sabeans" elsewhere (p. 214-215 and 237). These passages are typical blind defamations of the Muslim scholars who contradict Ibn Taymiyya in doctrine, specifically Ash'aris such as al-Rāzi and Ibn al-Juwaynī then, more generally, non-literalist or anti-literalist scholars of *kalām* including the Māturidis and Mu'tazilis. In the next section he assimilates them to the Christians.

<sup>379</sup> *Hamawīyya* (p. 233-235) = *Majmū' al-Fatāwā* (5:16).

are in disagreement<sup>380</sup> and disquiet among yourselves – more than any other disagreement on the face of the earth – then deny it. Always refer to the guideline of your minds in the Lawgiver’s presence, for verily that is the Truth wherewith I chose that you should worship Me.<sup>381</sup> Whatever is mentioned in the Book and Sunna in contradiction of that guideline of yours, or in affirmation of something your minds are unable to grasp – as applies with most of them – then know that I am testing you by revealing it to you. This is not in order that you take guidance from it, but so that you should exert yourselves in elucidating it in the light of linguistic oddities and outlandish terms and rarities of speech, without resigning (*mufawwidīn*) knowledge of it to Me <and, at the same time, negate that it signifies anything in connection to the Attributes>.” And that is the truth of the matter concerning the stance of the scholars of *kalām*.<sup>382</sup>

That is what he said, in the place where he fell into a fit and {*the devil prostrated him by his touch*} (2:275).

<sup>380</sup> An implicit comparison to the Christians (cf. Qur’ān 3:55, 5:48, 8:165, 16:92, 22:69, 43:63), as is the phrase “more than any other disagreement on the face of the earth.”

<sup>381</sup> At this point the text shifts to free indirect discourse.

<sup>382</sup> *Ḥamawīyya* (p. 236) = *Majmū‘ al-Fatāwā* (5:17). Ibn Jahbal omitted the bracketed segment but the meaning is clear: to Ibn Taymiyya, anyone who resigns the meaning of the Attributes to Allāh Most High without understanding them according to externalities is a nullifier (*mu’aṭṭil*). He intensifies the detraction of the scholars of *kalām* to comic excess: They resemble everything except Muslims (“Nabateans”, “Greeks”, “Hindus”, “Zoroastrians”), are the most divided sect in existence (“more than any other disagreement on the face of the earth”), are dull-witted for the most part (“as applies with most of them”), and both pedantic (“linguistic oddities and outlandish terms”) and presumptuous (“without resigning knowledge of it to Me”), and have replaced the Qur’ān and Sunna with their minds. The Ash’arī School after Ibn Taymiyya threw most of this elaborate demonization right back at him.





## The Absurdity of His Literalism

We say to him: What do you say concerning the mention of the “several eyes” (a‘yun),<sup>383</sup> the mention of the “flank” (*janb*),<sup>384</sup> the

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<sup>383</sup> {Build the ship under Our Eyes and by Our inspiration} (11:37); {Make the ship under Our eyes and Our inspiration} (23:27); {Surely you are before Our Eyes} (52:48); {That sailed before Our Eyes} (54:14). Cf. ‘Alā’ al-Dīn al-Bukhārī’s commentary on al-Pazdawī’s *Kashf al-Asrār* (1:60): “Allāh is described with the Attribute of Face and that of Hand, together with the upholding of His Transcendence (*tanzīh*) beyond having a form (*ṣūra*) and a limb (*jāriha*).” Also: Al-Bayhaqī: “The meaning of ‘The All-Seeing’ (*al-Baṣīr*) is He Who perceives the objects and colors which creatures perceive with their sights, without His having the organ of eye.” *Al-Asmā’ wal-Ṣifāt* (al-Kawtharī ed. p. 45; Ḥāshidī ed. 1:122-123). Al-Ghazzālī: “He sees without pupil or eyelids” as quoted in the *Reliance of the Traveller* (p. 820). Al-Qurṭubī: “We know from the saying of Allāh {and there is nothing whatsoever like Him} (42:11) that His Eyes do not consist in pupils.” *Al-Asnā’ fī Sharḥ Asmā’ Allāh al-Ḥusnā* (2:79). Al-Qurṭubī’s “Salafī” editor comments: “Rather, we assert two eyes for Allāh without saying how, and this is the doctrine of the *Salaf*!” The doctrine of the “two eyes” is also asserted by Ibn ‘Uthaymīn in his commentary on Ibn Taymiyya’s *al-Wāsiṭiyya*. On the contrary, the *Salaf* let the verses pass according to their actual wordings without altering them, in this case, to read “two eyes.” Al-Khaṭīb said: “As for what pertains to the Divine Attributes, whatever is narrated in the books of sound reports concerning them, the position of the *Salaf* consists in their affirmation and letting them pass according to their external wordings while negating from them modality (*kayfiyya*) and likeness to things created (*tashbīh*) [...]. We do not say that they are organs (*lā naqūlu innahā jawāriḥ*).” Narrated by al-Dhahabī with his chain from Muḥammad ibn Marzūq al-Za‘farānī in *Siyar A‘lām al-Nubalā’* (13:598) and *Tadhkirat al-Ḥuffāz* (3:1142-1143) from al-Khaṭīb’s epistle *al-Ṣifāt*. We quoted something similar from al-Baghawī’s *Sharḥ al-Sunna* in our note on *tafwīd* (*supra*, note 11). Ibn Ḥazm said, “To say that He has two eyes is null and void and part of the belief of anthropomor-

mention of the single "shin" (*sāq*),<sup>385</sup> and the mention of the

phists [...]. Ibn Ḥazm, *al-Fiṣal fil-Milal* (2:166). Today's anthropomorphists continue to insist on the attribution of two eyes without proof, adducing the Prophet's ﷺ statement, "The Antichrist (*al-dajjāl*) is one-eyed whereas your Lord is not one-eyed" [Narrated from Ibn 'Umar in *al-Bukhārī*, Muslim, and the *Sunan*], but ignoring or pretending to ignore that *Ahl al-Sunna* explained this statement metaphorically to mean that Allāh ﷻ is exempt of defects and of the attributes of creatures while the Antichrist is both created and imperfect cf. Ibn Ḥajar, *Fath al-Bārī* and al-Nawawī, *Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*. Ibn al-Jawzī said of the anthropomorphists: "They affirm that Allāh has a form and a face in addition to His Essence, two eyes, a mouth, a uvula, molar teeth, a physiognomy, two hands, fingers, a palm, a little finger, a thumb, a chest, thighs, two legs, and two feet." *Daḥ Shubah al-Tashbīh* (beginning).

<sup>384</sup> {*Alas, my grief that I was unmindful of the side of Allāh*} (39:56). Al-Bayhaqī in *al-Asmā' wal-Ṣifāt* (2:209 §772) narrates with a sound chain from Mujaḥid the explanation of this verse as: "What I wasted of His commands." Al-Bukhārī cited this explanation in his *Ṣaḥīḥ* in the book of *Janā'iz*, chapter on the merit of following a funeral. It is also the explanation given for *janb* ("flank" or "side") by al-Rāghib in *Mufradāt Alfāz al-Qur'ān*. Al-Dhahabī in the *Siyar* (13:368-369 §3988) criticized the anthropomorphic understanding of the Mālikī Abū 'Umar al-Ṭalamankī (d. 429) who mentioned the verse in a chapter named "The Side of Allāh" in his book on doctrine: "I saw a book of his on the Sunna in two volumes, most of which is good, but in some chapters is found what none would ever agree with, for example: 'Chapter on the Side of Allāh' in which he mentioned: {*Alas, my grief that I was unmindful of the side of Allāh*}. This is a scholar's lapse!" The latter phrase alludes to a ḥadīth narrated from Abū al-Dardā' whereby the Prophet ﷺ said: "I fear three things for my Community most of all: the lapse of the scholar, the disputation of a hypocrite about the Qur'ān, and those who deny Divine Foreordained Destiny." Al-Haythamī said in *Majma' al-Zawā'id*: "Al-Ṭabarānī narrates it in *al-Kabīr* but its chain contains Mu'āwiya ibn Yahyā al-Ṣadafī, who is weak." There are several other weak narrations for this ḥadīth. In the year 425 fifteen jurists witnessed against al-Ṭalamankī that he was a Khārijī. He was saved from execution in *extremis* by the Qāḍī of Saragossa and died four years later. *Tadhkirat al-Huffāz* (3:1099).

<sup>385</sup> Cf. the Qur'ānic verse {*The Day that the shin shall be bared*} (68:42). Ibn 'Abbās explained: "This is a day of affliction and hardship" and in another version: "It means the Day of Resurrection due to its hardship." Narrated by al-Ṭabarī in his *Tafsīr* (28:38-42), al-Ḥākim (2:499-500 *isnād ṣaḥīḥ*=1990 ed. 2:542), al-Bayhaqī in *al-Asmā' wal-Ṣifāt* (Kawtharī ed. p. 345-346=Ḥāshidī ed. 2:183-185 §746-748) with two fair chains and one sound chain according to Ibn Ḥajar in *Fath al-Bārī* (1959 ed. 13:428), Ibn Ḥibbān (16:382) with a fair chain according to al-Arna'ūt, al-Qurtubī (18:248-249), al-Ṣan'ānī (3:310) and al-Shawkānī (5:275-278) and in the *Tafsīrs*. Cf. Pickthall's *ad sensum* translation: "On the day when affliction befalls them in earnest." Ibn Qutayba in *Mukhtalif al-Ḥadīth* states that the baring of the shin is a metonymy for travails in which one hitches up one's lower garments, baring the legs. Ibn al-Jawzī in *Daḥ Shubah al-Tashbīh* (p. 15) and *Zād al-Masīr* (8:341) cites Ibn Qutayba and relates from Ibn 'Abbās, Mujaḥid, Ibrāhīm al-Nakha'ī, Qatāda, "and the vast majority of the scholars," the same meaning.

“several hands” (*aydī*)?<sup>386</sup> If we take these literally then we must affirm a being that has one face with many eyes, a single side, many hands, and a single shin! What being on earth [67] is possibly uglier? And if you take the liberty of interpreting this and that to be dual or singular, then why does Allāh ﷻ not mention it, nor the Prophet ﷺ, nor the *Salaf* of the Community?

Concerning the saying of Allāh ﷻ in the glorious Book, {*Allāh is the Light of the heavens and the earth*} (24:35): every reasonable person knows that the light which is seen on walls, roofs, roads, and courtyards, is not Allāh ﷻ. Even the Zoroastrians never claimed such a thing. If you now take it to mean that Allāh ﷻ is actually the Bringer of guidance and light to the heavens and the earth, then why does not Allāh ﷻ say so, nor His Prophet ﷺ, nor the *Salaf* of the Community?

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There is also His saying, {*We are nearer to him than his jugular vein*} (50:16) which [taken literally] would require that Allāh ﷻ be located inside the epiglottis! So why does Allāh ﷻ not explain it, nor His Prophet ﷺ, nor the *Salaf* of the Community?

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Cf. al-Qushayrī in *Laṭāʾif al-Ishārāt* (6:189), Ibn Fūrak in *Mushkal al-Ḥadīth* (p. 442), al-Khattābī, Ibn Baṭṭāl, al-Rāzī, Ibn Ḥazm in *al-Fiṣal* (2:129), Abū al-Suʿūd in his *Tafsīr* (9:18), al-Bayḍāwī in his, Ibn Kathīr in his (4:408-409), al-Wāḥidī in his (2:1124), Jalālayn (p. 760), al-Suyūṭī in *al-Durr al-Manthūr* (8:254-256), al-Karmī al-Ḥanbalī in *Aqāwīl al-Thiqāt* (p. 174), al-Zarkashī in *al-Burhān* (2:84) who cites it (2:179) as an example of a metaphor which it is extremely offensive to interpret literally, and others. Cf. Ibn ʿAbd al-Salām’s commentary on the meaning of this verse in *al-Ishāra ilā al-Ījāz fi Baʿd Anwāʿ al-Majāz*: “A metaphor for His aggravation of the judgment of His enemies and their humiliation, defeat, and punishment. The Arabs say of one that acts earnestly and intensely that ‘he has bared his shin.’” This explanation applies to the ḥadīth of Abū Hurayra and Abū Saʿīd al-Khudrī on the sight of Allāh in al-Bukhārī and Muslim. When Saʿīd ibn Jubayr (d. 94) was asked about it he became very angry and said: “Some people claim that ‘Allāh uncovers His Shin’!! Rather, He but uncovers affliction and hardship.” Narrated by ʿAbd ibn Ḥumayd in his *Musnad* and Ibn al-Mundhir as cited by al-Suyūṭī in *al-Durr al-Manthūr* (8:255).

<sup>386</sup> {*Among the things which Our Hands have fashioned*} (36:71); {*We have built the heaven with Hands*} (51:47). “Hands” (*ayd*) signifies strength as in *Lisān al-ʿArab*, *Mukhtār al-Sihāh*, *Mufradāt Alfāz al-Qurʾān*, and *al-Nihāya*. See “The ‘Hand’ of Allāh” in *Sunna Notes*.

also said, {*But prostrate yourself and draw near (unto)* (96:19). It is known that “drawing near,” direction-wise, is enough other than distance. Why then did Allāh ﷻ not ex- nor His Prophet ﷺ, nor the *Salaf* of the Community?

also said, {*Wheresoever you turn, there is the counte- of Allāh*} (2:115), {*And your Lord shall arrive*} (89:22), {*visited their building at the foundations*} (16:26), and {*Nev- s there unto them a new reminder from their Lord*} (21:2).

And the Prophet ﷺ said, reporting from his Lord: “Who- mes near Me one hand-span (*shibrān*) I come near him it (*dhirā’an*). If he comes near Me one cubit I come near arm’s length (*bā’an*). If he comes to Me walking, I come running.”<sup>387</sup> He also said, as authentically related in the

“I find the breath (*nafas*) of the Merciful coming from

<sup>388</sup> Also among his sayings ﷺ: “The Black Stone is the

d from Abū Hurayra and Anas by al-Bukhārī, Muslim, al-Tirmidhī, Ibn Mājah, d: “I am as My servant thinks of Me, and I sit with him when he remembers mentions Me in himself I mention him in Myself. If he mentions Me in a I mention him in a better gathering. If he comes near Me one hand-span come near him one cubit (*dhirā’an*). If he comes near Me one cubit I come n arm’s length (*bā’an*). If he comes to Me walking, I come to him running.” u said: “Meaning, with forgiveness and mercy.” Al-Bayhaqī in *al-Asmā’ wal-* hārī ed. p. 286; Hāshidī ed. 2:53-54): “As for the two instances of ‘coming near,’ ant by them is to express the swiftness of the response and forgiveness of e narrated from Qatāda.” Al-Bāji in *al-Muntaqā* (1:357): “He did not mean by a coming-near in terms of distance, for such is impossible and inexistent. All as the servant’s coming-near in terms of good works, and the coming-near of rms of answer and acceptance. In the same sense one says ‘So-and-so is near and they say of the leader ‘He is near his people’ if he helps them a lot and hem. This is well-known in the language of the Arabs.” Al-Nawawī in *Sharḥ im* (17:3-4): “Its meaning is, ‘Whoever comes near Me with obedience to Me, I him with My mercy, success, and help, and if he does more, I do more. If he king and hastens to obey Me, I come running, that is, I pour mercy on him ke him so that I do not make him need to walk much in order to attain his essage is that His reward is many times over proportional to one’s coming

d from Salama ibn Nufayl by al-Bukhārī in his *Tārīkh al-Kabīr* (4:70 §1990), al- nis *Musnad* (9:150 §3702), and al-Ṭabarānī in *al-Kabīr* (7:52); also narrated

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<sup>389</sup> Narrated from  
*Musnad*, al-Ṭabar  
(15:90-92), al-Kh  
Ibn al-Jawzī and  
(5:321-323 §949),

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<sup>390</sup> Narrated from l  
in *al-Zuhd* (p. 68),

right hand of Allāh on earth.”<sup>389</sup> He ﷺ also said, reporting from his Lord: “I sit with him who remembers Me.”<sup>390</sup>

With all the above [texts], do you feel secure that the one who attributes a body to Allāh ﷻ will not tell you, “[Texts with] these outward meanings are in countless abundance, many times the number of the narrations that pertain to direction”?

Therefore, if it is really the case that there is no anthropomorphism, although nothing in all this evidence apparently shows otherwise – not on the part of Allāh ﷻ, nor on that of the Prophet ﷺ, nor on that of the *Salaf* – then the anthropomorphist

with the words “your Lord” instead of “the Merciful” from Abū Hurayra by Aḥmad with a strong chain and al-Ṭabarānī in *Musnad al-Shāmiyyīn* (2:149 §1083) and *al-Awsaṭ* with a chain of trustworthy narrators per al-Haythamī (10:56) and Ibn Abī ‘Āsim in *al-Āḥād wal-Mathānī* (4:263). The Ulema saw in this narration a reference to Uways al-Qaranī. Another report states: “Do not curse the wind for it is part of the breath of the Merciful.” Narrated from Ubay ibn Ka‘b by Ibn Abī Shayba, al-Nasā‘ī in *al-Sunan al-Kubrā* (6:232 §10771-10772) and *‘Amal al-Yawm wal-Layla* (p. 521), al-Ḥākim (1990 ed. 2:298) who declared it *ṣaḥīḥ*, and al-Bayhaqī in the *Shu‘ab*. Ibn Qutayba, Ibn Fūrak, and others explained the term “the Merciful’s *nafas*” to mean his rescuing wind respectively in *Ta‘wīl Mukhtalaf al-Ḥadīth* (1972 ed. p. 212=1995 Dār al-Fikr ed. p. 195) and *Mushkal al-Ḥadīth wa-Bayānuh* (1985 ed. p. 198).

<sup>389</sup> Narrated from Ibn ‘Abbās, Jābir, Anas, and others by Ibn Abī ‘Umar al-Ma‘danī in his *Musnad*, al-Ṭabarānī, al-Suyūṭī in *al-Jāmi‘ al-Ṣaḥīḥ* (1:516 §3804-3805), Ibn ‘Asākir (15:90-92), al-Khaṭīb in *Tāriḥ Baghdād* (6:328), and others. It is considered forged by Ibn al-Jawzī and Ibn ‘Adī (al-Kāmil 1:342). Cf. al-Aḥdab, *Zawā‘id Tāriḥ Baghdād* (5:321-323 §949). Al-‘Ajlūnī stated it is *ṣaḥīḥ* as a halted report from Ibn ‘Abbās as narrated by al-Quḍā‘ī with the wording: “The Corner [of the Black Stone] (*al-rukn*) is the Right Hand of Allāh on earth [...]” and declared it *ḥasan* as a ḥadīth of the Prophet ﷺ. Ibn al-Dayba‘ reports in *Tamyīz al-Tayyib* (p. 65) that al-Sakhāwī graded it *ṣaḥīḥ mawqūf*. Ibn Qutayba in *Ta‘wīl Mukhtalif al-Ḥadīth* (1972 ed. p. 215=1995 ed. p. 198, 262) said that it was a saying of Ibn ‘Abbās and relates a saying of ‘Āisha that the Black Stone is the depository of the covenant of human souls with Allāh ﷻ on the Day of Promise (*alastu bi-rabbikum*). Its mention in the *Reliance of the Traveller* (p. 853b) as “narrated by al-Ḥākim, who declared it *ṣaḥīḥ*, from ‘Abd Allāh ibn ‘Amr,” is incorrect. Note: An authentic narration states that the Black Stone shall appear with two eyes and a tongue on the Day of Resurrection. Narrated by al-Tirmidhī, Ibn Mājah, Aḥmad, al-Dārimī, Ibn Ḥibbān (§3711-3712), and others.

<sup>390</sup> Narrated from Ka‘b al-Aḥbār from Mūsā ﷺ by Ibn Abī Shayba (1:108, 7:73), Aḥmad in *al-Zuhd* (p. 68), Abū Nu‘aym (6:37-42), and al-Bayhaqī in *Shu‘ab al-Īmān* (1:451).

will give you a dose of your own medicine and say to you, “If you are right, then people would be better guided without the Book or the Sunna!”

146 If you say, “What is generally established clearly shows meanings other than the outward meanings of the aforesaid texts,” then we do not find, in what is generally established, anything that negates anthropomorphism except it also negates direction.

147 Further, do you feel secure that some reincarnationist (*tanāsukhī*) will not infer supporting evidence for his doctrine from the saying of Allāh ﷻ, {*Into whatsoever form He wills, He casts you*} (82:8)? Do you feel secure that some nullifier (*mu‘aṭṭil*) will not infer supporting evidence for what he wants from the saying of Allāh ﷻ, {*Of that which the earth grows*} (2:61, 36:36)?<sup>391</sup> In such cases, you would find no way out of that avalanche except through proofs obtained outside the wordings themselves. [69]

148 The upshot of your words is that the position of the Shāfi‘īs, the Ḥanafīs, and the Mālikīs makes it inevitable that the people are better guided without the Book and without the Sunna. Do you think they will pronounce you an apostate for suggesting this?

<sup>391</sup> I.e. by saying that it is by necessity Allāh Most High Who grows it and not the earth. This is correct, but could qualify as nullification of external meanings according to Ibn Taymiyya’s method, and his mandatory acceptance of such interpretations could then allow nullifiers to interpret any other verse they wish figuratively, without rules.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

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### His Calumnies Against the Sunnī Theologians

Then you misconstrued the sayings of the *mutakallimūn* as pre-supposing that Allāh ﷻ, His Prophet ﷺ, and the *Salaf* of the Community neglected the doctrine of Islām until those [*mutakallimūn*] came along and expounded it. Tell us, then, how did Allāh ﷻ, His Prophet ﷺ, and the *Salaf* expound it? Tell us exactly where they say, as you are saying, that “Allāh ﷻ is in the upward direction, not downwards,” and that it is permitted to point to Him with sensory gestures! 149

If you do not find this in the Book of Allāh ﷻ, nor in the discourse of His Prophet ﷺ, nor in that of any of the Ten [that were promised Paradise], nor in the discourse of any of the First and Foremost among the Emigrants and Helpers, then blame yourself in the strongest terms and say: “I have convicted the scholars through an inconclusive argument.” And even if the argument were conclusive against them, you would be the first to stand convicted. 150

Then you claimed that the *mutakallimūn* say, “Whatever conforms to a rational criterion, affirm it; otherwise, deny it.” 151

But they never said that. They only said that it is obligatory to affirm the Attribute of perfection for Allāh ﷻ and that it is obligatory to negate any imperfection with regard to Him.

152 Just as Imām Aḥmad ؒ said, the [Ash‘arī] Ulema said, “Whatever came from Allāh ﷻ and His Messenger ﷺ, examine it in the light of the language of the Arabs, which Allāh ﷻ sent forth Muḥammad ﷺ speaking, as He said, {*And we never sent a Messenger save with the language of his folk*} (14:4). Therefore, whatever the Arabs understood, understand it also; and whoever comes your way bearing something different, toss out his words like an old shoe – into a ditch with the dry weeds.”

153 If Allāh wills, we shall devote a separate section, after thwarting his satanic insinuations, to the context of revelation that applies to these verses according to the latter [linguistic] directive.

154 In truth, he has only snatched up all his insinuations against the Congregation of the Muslims and his defamations of the Community of Islām from the dregs of the atheists who attack the Qur‘ān. We shall expose their heresy, if Allāh wills. It will be known, at that time, [70] exactly who is one of “the seedlings of the philosophers and the Hindus!”

155 Indeed, if that heedless person felt any shame, he would have known the status of the people of learning and knowledge in our Community – Allāh have mercy on them. Has he seen anyone else refute the philosophers, the Hindus [or: “the Jews”], the Christians, and the Persians, besides those very ones he calls their seedlings?

156 And did they ever rely, in their refutations of these sects, on a type of scholar that possesses no mind, no insight, and no understanding?<sup>392</sup> Did they ever put such scholars in charge of proving the existence of Allāh ﷻ in debates with atheists merely

<sup>392</sup> A reference to literalist scholars of ḥadīth of which Ibn Taymiyya is the archetype.



through transmitted reports? Or [debating] those that deny Prophethood merely through transmitted reports, so that their adversaries pounce on them and devour them, scoff at them and deride them, and so that enemies might jeer, to the delight of enviers? There is a lesson for the wise in the story of al-Ḥasan ibn Ziyād al-Lu'lu'ī.<sup>393</sup>

After this he turned to say that if [outward] meanings were precluded from generalities, they would become ambiguous proofs. We reply: this is just as the anthropomorphists would say to you: "Taking generalities as proofs for negating anthropomorphism is an invitation to double-entendre (*ilghāz*)!" 157

Then he went on to say, "O Glory to Allāh! Why did the Prophet ﷺ never say, even one day in his life, nor did any of the *Salaf* of our Community ever say: Do not believe in what these verses and ḥadīths indicate?"<sup>394</sup> 158

The reply to him is: And what, pray, are they indicating, so that they should say not to believe in it? This is the most disgraceful insinuation imaginable! Further, the anthropomorphist 159

<sup>393</sup> Abū 'Alī al-Ḥasan ibn Ziyād al-Lu'lu'ī al-Kūfī al-Anṣārī (d. 204), one of the major pious and learned Imāms of *fiqh* who narrated from Abū Ḥanīfa cf. al-Kawtharī's monograph *al-Imtā' bi-Sirat al-Imāmayn al-Ḥasan ibn Ziyād wa-Ṣāhibihi Muḥammad ibn Shujā'* and the end of his *Ta'nīb al-Khaṭīb*. The Shāfi'īs relate that one of them asked him: "What if someone, while praying, falsely accuses a married woman of adultery?" Al-Lu'lu'ī replied: "He must repeat his prayer." The Shāfi'ī asked: "What about his ablution?" Al-Lu'lu'ī said: "It is still valid." The Shāfi'ī said: "What if he bursts out laughing while in prayer?" Al-Lu'lu'ī said: "He must repeat both his prayer and his ablution." The Shāfi'ī said: "So the calumny of married women inside prayer is a lighter matter than laughing?" At this point al-Lu'lu'ī stood up and left. Narrated by al-Bayhaqī in *Faḍā'il al-Shāfi'ī* (1:217) and Ibn al-Subkī in *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfi'īyya al-Kubrā* (2:80). But the Ḥanafī position is taken from a Prophetic stipulation that *wuḍū'* is invalidated by uncontrolled laughter (*qahqaha*) inside prayer and – regardless of the grading of the *qahqaha* narration – stipulations connected with worship are beyond the province of analogy (cf. al-Lacknawī, *al-Fawā'id al-Baḥiyya* p. 105- 106) by Consensus. The point Ibn Jahbal is making by citing this episode is that if even an Imām of *fiqh* such as al-Lu'lu'ī can become tongue-tied in a debate, then *a fortiori* those untrained in other than ḥadīth narration. And Allāh knows best.

<sup>394</sup> *Hamawiyya* (p. 240) = *Majmū' al-Fatāwā* (5:19).

can also ask you, “O Glory to Allāh! Why did the Prophet ﷺ never say, nor did any of the *Salaf* of our Community ever say that Allāh ﷻ is not a body?”<sup>395</sup> Nor did they ever say: Do not believe the apparent meaning of the narrations that suggest anthropomorphism?”

160 [71] Then he invoked, as his proof, the saying of the Prophet ﷺ in which he described the Saved Group as “Whoever clings to my present path and that of my Companions.”<sup>396</sup> The

<sup>395</sup> Ibn Taymiyya would agree with the hypothetical anthropomorphist since he himself actually said in the book he wrote against Imām Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī: “It is well-known that the Book, the Sunna, and the Consensus nowhere say that all bodies (*ajsām*) are created, and nowhere say that Allāh Himself is not a body. None of the Imāms of the Muslims ever said such a thing. Therefore, if I also choose not to say it, it does not expel me from religion nor from the *Shari‘a*.” Ibn Taymiyya, *al-Ta‘sis Radd Asās al-Taqdīs = Bayān Talbīs al-Jahmiyya* (1:118) cf. *Minhāj al-Sunna* (Ed. Muḥammad Rashād Sālim, Mu‘assasat Qurṭuba, 1986) 2:205. He also claims in the latter (2:220) that the first to say that Allāh is not a body were the Jahmiyya and Mu‘tazila. Al-Ash‘arī in *Maqālāt al-Islāmiyyīn* (p. 211) says precisely the contrary: “*Ahl al-Sunna* and the people of ḥadīth said that Allāh ﷻ is not a body.” Similarly al-Kalābādhī in *al-Ta‘arruf li-Madhhab al-Taṣawwuf* (p. 34-35). Ibn Taymiyya knows this cf. *Minhāj* (2:326): “Al-Ash‘arī and his early disciples said [...] He is not a body.” Al-Kawthari in his *Maqālāt* (p. 350-353) comments on the *Ta‘sis* statement: “These words are complete impudence. What did he do with all the verses declaring Allāh ﷻ to be far removed from anything like unto Him? Does he expect that the idiocy that every single idiot can come up with be addressed with a specific text? Is it not enough that Allāh ﷻ said: {*There is nothing whatsoever like Him*} (42:11)? Or does he consider it permissible for someone to say: Allāh ﷻ eats this, chews that, and tastes this, just because no text mentions the opposite? This is disbelief laid bare and pure anthropomorphism.” In another passage of *al-Ta‘sis* (1:101) = *Bayān Talbīs al-Jahmiyya* (1:444) Ibn Taymiyya says: “You [Ash‘arīs] say that He is neither a body, nor an atom (*jawhar*), nor spatially bounded (*mutaḥayyiz*), and that He has no direction, and that He cannot be pointed to as an object of sensory perception, and that nothing of Him can be considered distinct from Him. You have asserted this on the grounds that Allāh is neither divisible nor made of parts and that He has neither limit (*ḥadd*) nor end (*ghāya*), with your view thereby to forbid one to say that He has any limit or measure (*qadr*), or that He even has a dimension that is unlimited. But how do you allow yourselves to do this without evidence from the Book and the Sunna?” Al-Kawthari comments: “The reader’s intelligence suffices to comment on these heretical statements. Can you imagine for an apostate to be more brazen than this, right in the midst of Muslim society?” See also n. 127 and 209.

<sup>396</sup> A sound narration from ‘Abd Allāh ibn ‘Amr by al-Tirmidhī (*ḥasan gharīb*),

impostor said: "Why did he not say: 'Whoever clings to the literal meaning of the Qur'ān concerning the verses of Islamic Doctrine, he is misguided; your only guidance is to refer to the criteria of your minds?'"<sup>397</sup>

Let the observer take note of his embellished calumny and deluded harping. For it is established beyond doubt that the way of the Prophet ﷺ and his Companions is the suspension (*kaff*) of such [explications], nor do we pursue them. It is he who does not keep silent because his method is *kalām*<sup>398</sup> and the pursuit of disaster by attempting to describe Allāh ﷻ with directional upwardness and allowing that He be pointed to with sensory gestures. I truly wonder, then, exactly who is in conformity with the Prophet ﷺ and his Companions. The poet spoke true who said, "She shot me with her bane and slinked away." 161

Further, an anthropomorphist can put to him the very same question that he put to us, word for word. 162

We can ask him: Why did not the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ say: "Salvation consists in saying that Allāh ﷻ is in the upward direction and that it is permissible to point to Him with sensory gestures?" If he claims, "But this is the way of the *Salaf* and the Companions," we reply: How did you reach this conclusion? Moreover, every innovating heretic can make the same claim. 163

Muḥammad ibn Naṣr al-Marwazī in *al-Sunna* (p. 23), Ibn 'Asākir, Abū Nu'aym in *Ma'rifaṭ al-Ṣaḥāba*, al-Ṭabarānī in *al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, and al-Ḥākim (1:129=1990 ed. 1:218), with chains containing 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Ziyād al-Ifriqī, who was declared weak by some but fair in his narrations by others, and from Anas by al-Ṭabarānī in *al-Awsaṭ*. Al-Lālikā'ī declared this ḥadīth sound (*ṣaḥīḥ*) in his *Sharḥ Uṣūl I'tiqād Ahl al-Sunna* (1:100) and it was included – with its variant versions – by al-Kattānī in his *Naẓm al-Mutanāthir* (p. 45-47) and Ibn al-Athīr in *Jāmi' al-Uṣūl* (10:408).

<sup>397</sup> *Ḥamawīyya* (p. 242-243) = *Majmū' al-Fatāwā* (5:20).

<sup>398</sup> Ibn Daqīq al-'Īd squarely described Ibn Taymiyya as a person who loves to talk, literally "he loves *kalām*" cf. note 27 above.



His Attribution of Unbelief  
and Heresy to the Ulema

164

Then the impostor claimed to trace this doctrine [Ash'arism] back – he said – to the disciples of the Jews, the pagans, and “the wayward among the Sabeans”! He said:

The first one on record to formulate this teaching is al-Ja'd ibn Dirham, from whom Jahm [72] ibn Şafwān took it then disseminated it, whereupon the doctrine received the name of the Jahmiyya. Al-Ja'd himself had taken it from Abān ibn Sim'an, who took it from Ṭālūt the maternal nephew of Labīd ibn al-Aṣ'am, from whom Ṭālūt took it. Labīd is the Jew who cast a spell on the Prophet ﷺ. They say that al-Ja'd came from Ḥarrān.<sup>399</sup>

<sup>399</sup> *Ḥamawīyya* (p. 243-246) = *Majmū' al-Fatāwā* (5:20-21). Actually Ja'd was the first to claim that the Qur'ān was created cf. Ibn Kathīr, *Bidāya* (9:382, 10:21), which has nothing to do with the discussion at hand but typifies Ibn Taymiyya's name-calling rhetoric. He and those who follow him apply this pseudo-genealogical construction to the Ash'aris and the Jahmis interchangeably in fluid fashion. Another way in which they typically misrepresent the Ash'aris is by mixing together Ash'ari and other positions indistinctly cf. his phrase “nor that He is in every place” (§131): the Ash'aris deny that Allāh is on the Throne or in the heaven in the anthropomorphic sense but the doctrine that “He is everywhere” has nothing to do with them and is a purely Jahmi claim. As a polemicist Ibn

- 165 The answer for him is: O you who claim that this doctrine is taken from the disciples of the Jews! In doing so, you have contradicted what must be known obligatorily by the Muslims. It is no secret to the elite in its entirety, and to many of the general public, that the Jews are anthropomorphists who liken Allāh to creation and that the root of idol worship is anthropomorphism. How then can the negation of anthropomorphism be attributed to Jews?
- 166 As for the pagans, they worshipped idols, and the Imāms have demonstrated that idol worshippers are the pupils of those who liken Allāh ﷻ to creation, and that the root of idol worship is *tashbih*. How then can the negation of *tashbih* be taken from the pagans?
- 167 As for the Sabeans, their country or area of geographical origin is well-known. Do we come from there? Do our opponents?
- 168 As for Ja'd ibn Dirham being from Ḥarrān,<sup>400</sup> this origin is correct. As for the sequencing of this chain of transmission he cited, then Allāh shall ask him about it. Allāh ﷻ is in the watchtower seeing all he does! (*Allāhu min warā'ihī bil-mirṣād*).
- 169 Would that he went on to cite the chain of transmission for his claim and his belief also – namely, that Pharaoh held Mūsā's God to be in the sky.<sup>401</sup>

Taymiyya's goal is to blur such lines between the Ash'arīs and known innovative sects so as to defame them in the course of debating them cf. notes 220, 315, 343, 376, 378.

<sup>400</sup> As is Ibn Taymiyya.

<sup>401</sup> Cf. §§ 66-70 and n. 314 and 360.

Then he attributed the doctrine [of the Ash'arīs] to Bishr al-Marrīsī<sup>402</sup> and mentioned that these are the same figurative interpretations which the Imāms declared to be invalid, and he refuted Bishr concerning them. Then he stated that what the Teacher Abū Bakr ibn Fūrak and the Imām Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī mentioned – Allāh sanctify their souls! – is the same as what Bishr had said. This is a hollow claim that does not stand up to careful scrutiny and upright reflection. It would be inconceivable that the Imāms would object to Bishr on the grounds that he said just what the Arabs say; and these two Imāms did not say other than what the Arabs said. The criticism against Bishr is limited to that in which he contradicted the Arabic language and said what the Arabs had never said.

<sup>402</sup> *Ḥamawīyya* (p. 251) = *Majmū' al-Fatāwā* (5:22). A repeat of the previous claim, since Bishr al-Marrīsī upheld Jahm's doctrine and held that Allāh ﷻ is in every place cf. al-Dhahabī, *al-'Uluw* (p. 417).





His Unreliable Manner  
of Quoting the *Salaf*

[73] Then he tried to buttress his claimed affiliation to the Emigrants and the Helpers ﷺ and proceeded to relate their position in the following terms. 171

He said: "Al-Awzā'ī said, 'We would say, at a time the *Tābi'ūn* were everywhere, that Allāh ﷻ is above (*fawq*) His Throne.'<sup>403</sup> 172

We reply to him: You begin with al-Awzā'ī and his syn-chronic layer, followed by the succeeding layer. Where are the First and the Foremost of the Emigrants and the Helpers? 173

<sup>403</sup> *Hamawiyya* (p. 299-300) = *Majmū' al-Fatāwā* (5:39). Narrated by al-Bayhaqī in *al-Asmā' wal-Ṣifāt* (Kawtharī ed. p. 408 = Hāshidī ed. 2:304 §865 *isnād layyin*) with a weak chain containing Muḥammad ibn Kathīr al-Miṣṣīṣī who is *ḍa'if* cf. al-Arna'ūt, *Tahrīr Taqrīb al-Tahdhīb* (3:310) while Muḥammad ibn 'Alī al-Jawharī is unknown. Yet Ibn Ḥajar grades its chain "good" (*isnād jayyid*) in the *Fath* (13:406) while Ibn Taymiyya claimed the chain was sound (*ṣaḥīḥ*) in the *Ḥamawiyya* and *Bayān Talbīs al-Jahmiyya* (2:38); as did Ibn al-Qayyim in his *Ijtimā' al-Juyūsh* (p. 69) while in *al-Ṣawā'iq* (2:211) he says, "Its narrators are all trustworthy Imāms!" As for al-Dhahabī his case is the strangest of the four as he declares the chain sound in *Tadhkirat al-Ḥuffāz* (1:181-182) although he himself states of al-Miṣṣīṣī in the *Siyar* (Fikr ed. 9:113): "His narrations can be written but, as for providing any proof, they are not up to it." On al-Awzā'ī see our *Four Imāms and Their Schools*.

- 174 You have also contradicted al-Awzā'ī's saying and have not said the same as he. For you said that Allāh ﷻ is not above His Throne, since you determined that what is meant by the heaven and the Throne is nothing other than the upward direction (*jihat al-'uluw*). You said, "What is meant by 'above His Throne' and by 'the heaven' is the heights."<sup>404</sup> So you have obviously diverged from al-Awzā'ī's saying.
- 175 This is not to say that your position is in the least coherent. For you have also determined that the heaven, in comparison to the Throne, is like a ring thrown into a desert;<sup>405</sup> how then can the heaven also be the Throne?
- 176 Finally, when did you ascertain the authenticity of this report from al-Awzā'ī?
- 177 Even if we were to concede to you all of the above, it remains that al-Awzā'ī never said, "Allāh ﷻ is above the Throne literally (*ḥaqīqatan*)." From where did you obtain this addition?
- 178 Then he related from Mālik ibn Anas, al-Thawrī, al-Layth, and al-Awzā'ī that they said of the narrations of the Divine Attributes: "Let them pass exactly the way they came to us."<sup>406</sup>

<sup>404</sup> *Ḥamawīyya* (p. 524) = *Majmū' al-Fatāwā* (5:106).

<sup>405</sup> Cf. §97 and §112.

<sup>406</sup> *Ḥamawīyya* (p. 303) = *Majmū' al-Fatāwā* (5:39). Narrated with a sound chain from al-Walīd ibn Muslim by al-Bayhaqī in the *Asmā'* (Hāshidī ed. 2:377 §955=Kawtharī ed. p. 453) and *al-I'tiqād* (p. 118=p. 57), al-Ājurri in *al-Sharī'a*, Ibn 'Abd al-Barr in *al-Tamhīd* (7:158), al-Lālikā'ī (3:527 §930), Ibn Qudāma in *Dhamm al-Ta'wīl* (p. 18 §24), and others. Also narrated from al-Zuhrī by al-Bayhaqī in the *Asmā'* (2:377 §954) and al-Lālikā'ī (§735). Sufyān ibn Sa'īd ibn Masrūq Abū 'Abd Allāh al-Thawrī al-Kūfī (d. 161), *Amīr al-Mu'minin fil-Ḥadīth*, was the Imām of the world in his time together with Abū Ḥanīfa in the estimation of Ibn al-Mubārak, of scrupulous Godwariness, simple living, and learning from whom narrated 1,000 *muḥaddiths*. Al-Layth ibn Sa'd ibn 'Abd al-Raḥmān Abū al-Ḥārith al-Fahmī (94-175) was the foremost Imām of Egypt of famous generosity and learning, greater than Mālik in *fiqh* in the estimation of Ibn al-Mubārak, al-Shāfi'ī, Sa'īd ibn Abī Ayyūb, and Yahyā ibn Bukayr. Aḥmad praised the high authenticity of his ḥadīth narrations. On both of them see our *Four Imāms and Their Schools*.

The question for him is: Why did you not do exactly as the Imāms ordered? Instead, you described Allāh ﷻ with the upward direction, when not one report came to us to that effect – and even if you were to spend the earth's weight in gold in order to hear such a thing from a true knower of his Lord, still, you would never be happy! Not until you did as you pleased and transmitted it in the way your fancy dictated, without letting it pass, without acknowledging it, and without adhering to the guidelines you yourself reported from the Imāms! 179

He narrated the saying of Rabī'a and Mālik: "Istiḡā' is not unknown."<sup>407</sup> 180

I wonder who ever said that *istiḡā'* was unknown. Rather, it is you who claimed a specific meaning for it and you want to attribute this claim to the two Imāms, but we are not going to let you! 181

[74] Then he related from Mālik that the latter replied to the questioner: "Belief in it is obligatory and asking about it is an innovation. And I do not believe you are anything but an innovator!" Then Mālik gave the order that he be taken out.<sup>408</sup> 182

<sup>407</sup> Narrated by al-Bayhaqī with a sound chain, *al-Asmā' wal-Ṣifāt* (2:305-306 §867), al-Baghawī in *Sharḥ al-Sunna* (1:171), al-Lālikā'ī in *Sharḥ Uṣūl al-I'tiqād* (2:398), Ibn Abī Zayd al-Qayrawānī in *al-Jāmi' fil-Sunan* (p. 123), Abū Nu'aym (6:325-326), cf. Ibn 'Abd al-Barr in *al-Tamhīd* (7:151) and Ibn Ḥajar, *Fath* (13:407). Note that the wording that says: "The 'how' is unknown" (*al-kayfu majhūl*) is falsely attributed to Imām Mālik, although also cited from Rabī'a with a sound chain by al-Bayhaqī in *al-Asmā' wal-Ṣifāt* (2:306 §868) and without chain by Ibn al-'Arabī in *ʿArīḍat al-Aḥwadhī* (2:235), but is an aberrant narration (*riwāya shādhāha*). Yet it is the preferred wording of Ibn Taymiyya in *Dar' Ta'arūḍ al-'Aql wal-Naql* (1:278) and *Fatāwā* (17:373), as he infers from it support for his positions although he reports it correctly as "The 'how' is inconceivable" in his *Ḥamawīyya* (p. 306-307) = *Majmū' al-Fatāwā* (5:40). Rabī'a ibn 'Abd al-Raḥmān Farrūkh Abū 'Uthmān al-Qurashī al-Taymī (d. 136), known as Rabī'at al-Ra'ī for his *fiqh*, was the Muftī of Madīna, one of the *Mujtahid* Imāms, and the teacher of Imām Mālik. When Rabī'a died, Mālik said: "The sweetness of *fiqh* is gone."

<sup>408</sup> *Ḥamawīyya* (p. 308) = *Majmū' al-Fatāwā* (5:40-41).

183 The answer for him is: I wonder which is the one that followed Mālik's guidelines! Is it we [Ash'arīs] who did as he did, by our ordering everyone to refrain [from discussion] and by restraining non-scholars (*wa-aljamnā al-‘awāmm*)<sup>409</sup> from probing such topics, or is it the one who made it his area of expertise, tossing it about, piecing it together haphazardly, imparting it to others, writing about it, teaching it, and ordering the uneducated public to plunge into it? Did such a person ever express disapproval of the questioner on this specific issue and order that he be taken out as Mālik did on the same specific issue? If one considers this, one knows that what he [Ibn Taymiyya] related from Mālik is a proof against him, not for him.

184 Then he related from ‘Abd al-‘Azīz ibn ‘Abd Allāh ibn Abī Salama al-Mājishūn (d. 164) that, when he was asked about what the Jahmiyya had rejected, he replied:

To proceed: I have understood the following from what the Jahmiyya and those who disagreed with them have said concerning the Attribute of the Lord of Might. His magnificence is beyond description or estimation; tongues will sooner dry up than account for His nature (*ṣifa*); minds are at an end before they begin to know His power; His magnificence has turned back the minds to their point of departure, {*weakened and made dim*} (67:4). For they were ordered only to examine and reflect upon what He created with perfect measure; and “how” is asked only of what used not to be and then was. As for Him Who never changes, never ceases to exist, has always existed without beginning, and like unto Whom there is nothing and no one: no one knows “how” He is except He. <How could He be known as He is, Who has no beginning, does not die, and does not turn to dust? How can the

<sup>409</sup> A reference to al-Ghazzālī's *Iljām al-‘Awāmm* which the author cites below.

attribute of anything of His possess a limit (*ḥadd*) or an end-point (*muntahā*) that anyone might get to know or the extent of which he might define?<sup>410</sup> Yet He is the manifest Truth, truer than Whom there is none, and nothing stands more manifest than He.> The proof that minds are powerless to ascertain His nature (*ṣifa*) is that they are powerless to ascertain the nature of the smallest one of his creatures. You can hardly see it move or disappear due to its smallness while its hearing and sight are completely imperceptible, <not to speak of what goes on [75] in its mind, which is even far more removed and hidden from you than what can be observed of its hearing and sight.><sup>411</sup>

Blessed be Allāh, the best Creator, the Creator of creators, Master of masters and Lord of all!

<sup>410</sup> The same negation of limit for Allāh is held by Sufyān al-Thawrī, Shu‘ba, Ḥammād ibn Zayd, Ḥammād ibn Salama, Sharīk, Abū ‘Awāna, Aḥmad, al-Tustarī, Abū Dāwūd al-Ṭayālīsī, Ibn Kullāb, Abū Ḥātim, al-Ash‘arī, Ja‘far al-Šādiq, Mālik, al-Ṭahāwī, Ibn Khafīf, Ibn Fūrak, Ibn Ḥibbān, al-Khaṭṭābī, al-Qushayrī, and al-Bayhaqī. Cf. our *Four Imāms*, chapter on Imām Aḥmad. The anthropomorphists try to annul this axiom with the claim that “He has limits which He knows” although the *Salaf* never said such a thing but the contrary. In other words, al-Mājīshūn says, “How can the attribute of anything of His possess a limit or an endpoint that He or anyone might know or the extent of which He or anyone might define?”

<sup>411</sup> *Ḥamawiyya* (p. 311-321) = *Majmū‘ al-Fatāwā* (5:42-46). Part of a longer report narrated by al-Dhahabī in the *Siyar* (Risāla ed. 7:311-312). He incorrectly declares it *ṣaḥīḥ* from Ibn Mājīshūn in his *Uluw* (Saqqāf ed. p. 402-404=Ryadh ed. p.141-142=Madīna ed. p. 105-106=*Mukhtaṣar* p. 144-145) without providing the chain but does provide it in the *Siyar*: through ‘Umar ibn Muḥammad ibn ‘Isā al-Jawharī who is known to have narrated at least one forgery (cf. *Mizān*), from al-Athram, from ‘Abd Allāh ibn Šāliḥ al-Juhanī who is at best of fair narrations subject to confirmation [cf. al-Dhahabī, *Mizān* (2:440-445 §4383). Al-Arna‘ūt said of him in *Taḥrīr al-Taqrīb* (2:222 §3388): “Truthful (*ṣadūq*), his memorization leaves something to be desired, of fair narrations in follow-ups (*al-mutāba‘āt*).”] Also partly narrated by al-Lālikā‘ī (2:502-503) with a broken chain through Abū Ḥātim al-Rāzī, and cited by Ibn Baṭṭa in the Turkish ms. of his *Ibāna*. Al-Dhahabī omits the bracketed segments from the *‘Uluw* and *Siyar*.

185 Then he related from al-Mājishūn the ḥadīths that concern the Attributes and he mentioned the saying of Allāh ﷻ, {*The whole earth is His handful on the Day of Resurrection, and the heavens are rolled in His right hand*} (39:67). Al-Mājishūn continued:

By Allāh! No sooner does He indicate to them the vastness of what He described of Himself and what His handful encompasses, than the minisculeness of their own selves shows, and the realization that they only know what was inspired to them to know, and what was created according to what their hearts can know. Therefore, just as He described or named Himself as taught to us by His Prophet ﷺ, that is also how we describe or name Him, exactly as He did. We do not burden ourselves with additional attributes or this or that other than what He told us, and we do not burden ourselves by seeking to know what He did not describe [of Himself].

186 Then al-Mājishūn expanded on this. We say to him who related those words: You have adduced an excellent proof – for us! And you have provided the best weapon – for your foes.

187 Concerning the words of ‘Abd al-‘Azīz ؒ and what he said about the magnificence and greatness of Allāh ﷻ which boggle the minds and surpass all understanding: this is exactly what all the learned people of knowledge have said in verse and in prose. As for you, you have ridiculed and mocked the great Masters and Imāms of the Religion who are the most eminent figures in the Community, no later than in the second page of your incitement to evil. Because they have admitted helplessness and incapacity [to understand], you reproached them and took them to task as if it were a sin, whereas it is you who must be rebuked, and they who must be excused.

You took the saying of ‘Abd al-‘Azīz as a proof but he said, concerning the handful of Allāh ﷻ, exactly what the *mutakallimūn* have said in every page of theirs. [76] ‘Abd al-‘Azīz ordered that the Lord be described only in the terms in which He described Himself and that one keep absolutely silent otherwise. This is precisely what we say, what we do, and what we hold firmly to be our belief. 188

You, on the other hand, described Him with directional upwardness when He never thus described Himself. You declared it permissible to point to Him with sensory gestures, which He never mentioned. We have passed on the Attributes exactly as they came to us, while you have joined together the Throne and the heaven as meaning directional altitude and you said, “in the heaven literally” and “on the Throne literally.” Glory to Him Who granted us rational minds! Truly, such a phenomenon was inscribed into the Book as destined to take place. 189

Then he mentioned, as related from Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan, the agreement of the jurists in describing the Lord [only] in the terms that came to us in the Qur’ān and the narrations of the Attributes.<sup>412</sup> 190

<sup>412</sup> “The jurists from East to West agree that we should believe in the Qur’ān and the ḥadīths that the trustworthy transmitted from the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ in regard to the Divine Attributes, without *tafsīr*, nor description, nor *tashbīh*, and whoever explains something of this today has come out of what the Prophet ﷺ followed and parted with the Congregation. For they neither described nor explained but only responded with what is in the Book and the Sunna then kept silent. Therefore, whoever speaks like Jahm has parted with the Congregation for He has described Him as a nonexistent entity.” *Ḥamawīyya* (p. 332) = *Majmū‘ al-Fatāwā* (5:50 cf. 5:143). Narrated from Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan by al-Lālikā‘ī in his *Sharḥ al-Uṣūl* (3:432 §740) with a chain of complete unknowns and from Ibn Qudāma in *Dhamm al-Ta’wīl* (p. 11-12 §13) with the same chain further marred by variations in the names of four of the narrators. Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan al-Shaybānī (d. 189) was the foremost companion of Imām Abū Ḥanīfa with Abū Yūsuf whom he succeeded as the head judge in the service of the Caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd. He was a teacher to Imām Aḥmad, cf. our *Four Imāms and Their Schools*.

- 191 We say to him: Nor do we deny a single letter of the above, but it is you who said, "I describe the Almighty Lord as being in the upward direction and I declare permissible to point to Him with sensory gestures." Where is this found in the Qur'ān and the reports of the trustworthy narrators? You have not benefited us with any *fatwā* in the matter.
- 192 Then he related from Abū 'Ubayd al-Qāsim ibn Sallām ؓ that he said, "If asked about their explanation [*i.e.* the verses and narrations of the Attributes], we do not explain them," and that he said, "We have not seen nor heard of anyone that explained them."<sup>413</sup>
- 193 We say to him: Praise belongs to Allāh! Our goal is met. But I wonder who it is that explained the heaven and the Throne? Who is it that said they mean the upward direction? And who is it that relinquished explaining them and let them pass just as they came to us?
- 194 Then he related that [ 'Abd Allāh] Ibn al-Mubārak ؓ said, "Our Lord is known to be above (*fawq*) His heaven, over ('*alā*) His Throne, distinct (*bā'in*) from His creation, and we do not say, as the Jahmiyya claim, that He is right here on earth (*hāhunā fil-ard*)."<sup>414</sup>

<sup>413</sup> *Hamawiyya* (p. 333-335) = *Majmū' al-Fatāwā* (5:51). Narrated with a sound chain by al-Bayhaqī in *al-Asmā'* (Ḥāshidī ed. 2:198 §760) and a weak chain by al-Dhahabī in *al-Uluw* (p. 451=Mukhtaṣar p. 186). On al-Qāsim ibn Sallām see the chapter on Imām Aḥmad in our *Four Imāms and Their Schools*.

<sup>414</sup> *Hamawiyya* (p. 337) = *Majmū' al-Fatāwā* (5:51-52) adding that this was also the position of Imām Aḥmad but Ibn Taymiyya altered the wording as shown in the next note. Narrated with a sound chain by al-Bukhārī in *Khalq Af'āl al-'Ibād* (p. 31), al-Bayhaqī in *al-Asmā' wal-Ṣifāt* (Kawtharī ed. p. 427; Ḥāshidī ed. 2:336), and others. On Ibn al-Mubārak see the chapter on Imām Abū Ḥanīfa in *The Four Imāms and Their Schools*.



We say to him: ‘Abd Allāh clearly stipulated that Allāh ﷻ is “above His heaven, over His Throne;” did ‘Abd Allāh ever say: “The heaven and the Throne are one, namely, the upward direction?”<sup>415</sup>

<sup>415</sup> Al-Bayhaqī narrated that Abū Dāwūd al-Ṭayālīsī said: “Sufyān al-Thawrī, Shu‘ba, Ḥammād ibn Zayd, Ḥammād ibn Salama, Sharīk, and Abū ‘Awāna did not hold [that Allāh ﷻ had] a limit nor a likeness nor a similitude. They would narrate the ḥadīths [of the Attributes] without saying ‘how’. If asked, they would answer with whatever was transmitted. And this is also our position.” Al-Bayhaqī continued: “As for the report to which cling those who believe that Allāh ﷻ has a direction, whereby ‘Ali ibn al-Ḥasan said: ‘I asked ‘Abd Allāh ibn al-Mubārak, “How (*kayf*) do we know our Lord?” He replied, “In the seventh heaven on His Throne.” I said, “The Jahmiyya also say He is such.” He said, “We do not mean it like the Jahmiyya. We mean He Himself (*huwa huwa*).” I said, “With a limit (*bi-ḥadd*)??” He said, “Yes, by Allāh, with a limit!” [Narrated mostly in anthropomorphist works: ‘Abd Allāh ibn Aḥmad’s *al-Sunna*, ‘Uthmān ibn Sa‘īd al-Dārimī’s *al-Radd ‘alā al-Marrīsī* and *al-Radd ‘alā al-Jahmiyya*, al-Dhahabī’s *al-Uluw*, and Ibn Taymiyya’s *Ḥamawīyya*.] – ‘Abd Allāh only meant by ‘limit’ the limit dictated by transmission (*ḥadd al-sam‘*), namely, that the truthful report stated that {*He established Himself on the Throne*} (20:5), so He is on the Throne as He related. By saying this, he meant to belie the Jahmiyya who claimed that He is in every place. His other report confirms this, and Allāh knows best. From ‘Ali ibn al-Ḥasan ibn Shaqīq: ‘I heard ‘Abd Allāh ibn al-Mubārak say, “We know our Lord to be above (*fawq*) seven heavens, He established Himself over His Throne, distinct (*bā’in*) from His creation, and we do not say as the Jahmiyya said, that He is right here” – and he pointed to the ground (*hāhunā fil-ard*).’ By the term ‘distinct’ he means, as he explained directly afterwards, to negate the claim [of intermixing (*imtizāj*)] of the Jahmiyya, not to suggest direction on the opposite side. He means what the Law said in absolute terms, and Allāh knows best.” *Al-Asmā’ wal-Ṣifāt* (Kawtharī ed. p. 426-427; Ḥāshidī ed. 2:334-336). Al-Kawtharī pointed out that nowhere in the Qur’ān and Sunna are the terms “in the seventh heaven” applied to Allāh ﷻ nor the term “on His Throne” other than exactly as the verse of *istiwā’* said and that that report from Ibn al-Mubārak is therefore *munkar* regardless of its chain. When Imām Aḥmad was told one time: “Ibn al-Mubārak never said such and such,” he replied: “Ibn al-Mubārak did not descend from heaven!” In Ibn al-Jawzī, *Daḥḥ al-Shubah al-Tashbīh* (Saqqāf ed. p. 111).

- 196 [77] Then he related from Ḥammād ibn Zayd that he said:  
 “Those Jahmiyya are only trying to say that there is nothing in  
 the heaven.”<sup>416</sup>
- 197 Again, we say to him: You have followed the example of the  
 Jahmiyya, for you explicitly said that the heaven (*al-samā*) is not  
 really the heaven itself but a derivative meaning of height (*al-*  
*sumū*), which you explained to mean the upward direction.  
 Therefore, it would be more appropriate to apply to yourself  
 what Ḥammād applied to the Jahmiyya.<sup>417</sup>
- 198 Then he related from Ibn Khuzayma that “whoever does not say  
 that Allāh ﷻ is above His heavens, over His Throne, distinct  
 from His creation, must be summoned to repent. If he does, well  
 and good. Otherwise he must be executed and his body thrown  
 on a garbage heap so that neither Muslims nor *Dhimmīs* shall be  
 harmed by it.”<sup>418</sup>

<sup>416</sup> *Ḥamawiyya* (p. 337-338) = *Majmū' al-Fatāwā* (5:52). Narrated from 'Abd Allāh ibn Aḥmad in the *Musnad* and Abū Nu'aym (6:258) cf. al-Bukhārī in *Khalq Af'āl al-'Ibād* (p. 31), al-Dhahabī in *al-'Uluw* (p. 405), and others. Also reported from Ayyūb al-Sakhtyānī cf. *Ḥilya* and *'Uluw* (p. 383). Ḥammād ibn Zayd ibn Dirham Abū Ismā'il al-Azdi (98-179) was one of the Imāms of the *Salaf* and a contemporary of Abū Ḥanīfa and Mālik of whom 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Maḥdī said, “People (*al-nās*) in their time were four: Ḥammād ibn Zayd in al-Baṣra, al-Thawrī in al-Kūfa, Mālik in al-Ḥijāz, and al-Awzā'ī in al-Shām.”

<sup>417</sup> Al-Sayyid Yūsuf al-Rifā'ī wrote in the forty-seventh advice of his *Advice to the Scholars of Najd*: “You accuse the Muslims who differ with you of being deviant Jahmīs or Mu'tazilīs. The truth is, you are the Jahmiyya because you agree with them in some of their doctrines and you are the Mu'tazila because you concur with them in denying sainthood and saints as well as their miraculous gifts, the life of the dead, and the arbitration of reason in matters of the unseen in religious issues.” They also, like the Mu'tazila and Jahmiyya, partly deny the most honorable status of the Prophet ﷺ and his intercessorship.

<sup>418</sup> *Ḥamawiyya* (p. 339-340) = *Majmū' al-Fatāwā* (5:52). I.e. by its unwanted presence in their respective burial grounds. See note 228 above, in Shaykh Ghāwji's introduction and, on Ibn Khuzayma, our *Four Imāms and Their Schools*.

Let him know that the answer to the like of the above has been given already. Moreover, both the experts and the non-experts are quite aware of Ibn Khuzayma's talk in the field of doctrines and of his book devoted to anthropomorphism (*al-tashbīh*) which he named *al-Tawhīd*. The Imāms of the Religion have refuted it in numbers greater than can be surmised. They said about him just what he had said of others and this is known. 199

Then he related from 'Abbād al-Wāsiṭī, 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Mahdī, and 'Āṣim ibn 'Alī ibn 'Āṣim something similar to what he related from Ḥammād [ibn Zayd] and which we clarified.<sup>419</sup> 200

After that, he mentioned the authentic narration from Anas ibn Mālik رضي الله عنه whereby he said: "Zaynab [bint Jaḥsh] رضي الله عنها used to boast to the other wives of the Prophet ﷺ saying, 'You were married off by your families but I was married off by Allāh from above seven heavens.'<sup>420</sup> 201

We reply: there is no evidence in this ḥadīth that Zaynab said that Allāh ﷻ was above seven heavens. Rather, it was her marrying off by Allāh ﷻ that took place above seven heavens. 202

[78] Then he related from Abū Sulaymān al-Khaṭṭābī what he had related before from 'Abd al-'Azīz al-Mājishūn.<sup>421</sup> We have 203

<sup>419</sup> *Ḥamawīyya* (p. 341-345) = *Majmū' al-Fatāwā* (5:52-53). The report of 'Abbād al-Wāsiṭī is narrated by 'Abd Allāh ibn Aḥmad in *al-Sunna* (Dammām ed. 1:126-127 *isnād ḍa'if*) with a very weak chain because of Yaḥyā ibn Ismā'il al-Wāsiṭī [omitted in al-Khalīlī's chain from 'Abd Allāh in *al-Irshād* (3:830)] cf. al-Bukhārī's *Tārīkh al-Kabīr* (1:208), *al-Kāmil*, *Mizān*, *Mughnī* etc.; the report of Ibn Mahdī is narrated by al-Bayhaqī in *al-Asmā'* with a weak chain because of 'Amr ibn 'Abbās al-Bāhili; the report of 'Āṣim is not found anywhere and is cited in *al-'Uluw* also without chain.

<sup>420</sup> Narrated by al-Bukhārī and Muslim, an allusion to the Divine injunction to the Prophet to marry her specifically in the verse {We gave her unto you in marriage} (33:37). *Ḥamawīyya* (p. 346) = *Majmū' al-Fatāwā* (5:54).

<sup>421</sup> *Ḥamawīyya* (p. 365-368) = *Majmū' al-Fatāwā* (5:58-59). Ḥamd ibn Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm ibn Khaṭṭāb, Abū Sulaymān al-Bustī al-Khaṭṭābī al-Shāfi'ī (319-388), "one of the Imāms of the Sunna" (Ibn al-Sam'ānī), an Imām of *fiqh*, ḥadīth Master, and master of the Arabic language. Among his sayings: "The people of our time have split into two

asserted our complete agreement with the latter and his [*i.e.* Ibn Taymiyya's] contravention of what Ibn al-Mājjishūn stated.

204

He stated the same positions from al-Khaṭīb, Abū Bakr al-Ismā'īlī, Yaḥyā ibn 'Ammār, Abū Ismā'īl al-Harawī [al-Anṣārī], and Abū 'Uthmān al-Ṣābūnī.<sup>422</sup>

parties. The first [the Mu'tazila and their sub-groups] altogether disavow this kind of ḥadīth and declare them forged outright. This implies their attributing lies to the scholars who have narrated them, that is, the Imāms of our religion and the transmitters of the Prophetic ways, and the intermediaries between us and the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ. The second party [the literalists] give their assent to the narrations and apply their outward meanings literally, in a way bordering on anthropomorphism. As for us, we steer clear from both views and accept neither as our school. It is therefore incumbent upon us to seek for these ḥadīths, when they are cited and established as authentic from the perspectives of transmission and attribution, an interpretation (*ta'wīl*) derived according to the known meanings of the foundations of the Religion and the schools of the scholars, without rejecting the narrations outright, as long as their chains are acceptable and narrators trustworthy." *Ma'ālim al-Sunan* (Ḥims. ed. 5:95) in al-Būṭī, *al-Salafiyya* (p. 140).<sup>422</sup> *Hamawiyya* (p. 369-371) = *Majmū' al-Fatāwā* (5:59). Al-Khaṭīb: narrated by Ibn Qudāma in *Dhamm al-Ta'wīl* with a strong chain and partly cited by al-Dhahabī in the *Siyar* and 'Uluw but see exact text in our biographical notice on al-Khaṭīb al-Baghḍādī in our volume on the Ash'arī School in *shā Allāh*. Al-Ismā'īlī: narrated from his *I'tiqād al-Sunna* by al-Dhahabī in *Tadhkirat al-Ḥuffāz* (3:949), *al-'Uluw* (p. 525-526 cf. *Mukhtaṣar* p. 248-249), and the *Siyar* with a strong chain despite Mas'ūd ibn 'Abd al-Wāḥid as he is trustworthy (*thiqa*) cf. al-Dhahabī in *Ma'rifat al-Qurrā' al-Kibār* (2:519) but see al-Ismā'īlī's explicit stand on anthropomorphism in his *I'tiqād A'immāt al-Ḥadīth* (p. 51-52) cf. Ibn Ḥajar, *Fath* (8:664): "One must not attribute organs (*a'dā'*) nor limbs (*jawāriḥ*) to Allāh ﷻ nor length nor breadth nor density nor thinness (*walā al-tūl wal-'arḍ wal-ghilṣa wal-diqqa*) nor any such characteristic the like of which applies to created beings." Yaḥyā ibn 'Ammār al-Shaybānī al-Sijzī (d. 422): al-Dhahabī cites him without chain in *al-'Uluw* (p. 547 cf. *Mukhtaṣar* p. 263) then criticizes his wording cf. *Mukhtaṣar al-'Uluw* (p. 263 §319): "Your saying *bi-dhātīhi* is coming from your own bag!" In the *Siyar* (Fikr ed. 13:310 §3932=17:481): "His zeal against innovators and the Jahmiyya pushed him to trespass the way of the *Salaf*"; elsewhere in the *Siyar* (12:249=16:97 cf. *Mizān al-I'tidāl* 3:507) he attributes innovation to him for his condemnation of Ibn Ḥibbān. Al-Harawī: Ibn Taymiyya is referring to his anthropomorphist manifesto *al-Fārūq fīl-Sifāt* as cited by al-Dhahabī in *al-'Uluw* (p. 565 cf. *Mukhtaṣar* p. 278). Both Yaḥyā and his student al-Harawī al-Anṣārī are unmitigated anthropomorphists and rabid anti-Ash'arīs who considered Ibn Ḥibbān a non-Sunni! Al-Ṣābūnī: Ibn Taymiyya is probably referring to the so-called 'Aqīdat al-Salaf attributed to al-Ṣābūnī, in which is found the statement: "The Masters of Ḥadīth hold and bear witness that Allāh is above His seven heavens, on His Throne, just as His Book said" in *Majmū' at al-Rasā'il al-Muniriyya* (1:109). [Al-Dhahabī cites it in *al-'Uluw* (p. 549 cf. *Mukhtaṣar* p. 265) but then

He also cited from Abū Nu‘aym al-Aṣbahānī that the well-established narrations concerning *istiwā’* are adopted by the scholars and their contents affirmed without saying “how” nor drawing comparisons nor likening anything with anything created, to the effect that He is established (*huwa mustawin*) over His Throne in His heaven, with the exclusion of His earth. He also cited this from Ma‘mar al-Aṣbahānī.<sup>423</sup>

205

We have made it clear to the reader more than once that he [Ibn Taymiyya] actually contradicts that position and that he never held it in the least except he immediately nullified it! For

206

adds much material which is not found in the *Muniriyya* text: “and the Ulema of the *Umma* etc.”] Nevertheless, such a statement is not found in the long *Waṣiyya* of al-Ṣābūnī – cited in full by Ibn al-Subkī in *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfi‘iyya al-Kubrā* (4:285-292) – which states: “Allāh is much exalted beyond what both the negators (*al-mu‘aṭṭila*) and anthropomorphists (*al-mushabbiha*) claim. Regarding the verses that mention the Attributes of the Creator ﷻ and the authentic Prophetic narrations in that chapter... [I] tread the path of the pious Predecessors and the Imāms of the Religion in accepting them and narrating them after ascertaining the soundness of their transmission chain, citing them in their external wordings, confirming them, fully assenting to them, but guarding against any belief of modality or anthropomorphism in them, avoiding what leads to rejecting them or altering them through reprovved figurative interpretation (*ta’wīl*) for which Allāh never gave authority, nor did the Companions, Successors, and pious *Salaf* say anything like it.”

<sup>423</sup> *Ḥamawiyya* (p. 372-378) = *Majmū‘ al-Fatāwā* (5:60-61). Ibn Taymiyya attributes two chainless statements to Abū Nu‘aym – a staunch Ash‘arī – possibly referencing the first to his *Hilyat al-Awliyā’* – where there is no trace of it – and the second to *Mahajjat al-Wāthiqīn wa-Madrajat al-Wāmiqīn* of which he alone apparently had knowledge, cf. also *Majmū‘ al-Fatāwā* (18:71) and al-Saffārīnī in *Lawāmi‘ al-Anwār al-Baḥiyya* (1:196). Al-Dhahabī cites the first statement, also without chain, in his *‘Uluw* (p. 544 cf. *Mukhtaṣar* p. 261) but references it to a book he names *al-‘Iṭiqād* while in his *Tadhkira* (p. 1097) he calls it *al-Mu‘taqad*. No one else apparently knows it except Ibn al-Qayyim and it is established that Abū Nu‘aym was Ash‘arī in doctrine – see on him our *Ash‘arī School*. As for the purported citation from Ma‘mar, it is chainless just as in *al-‘Uluw* (p. 545 cf. *Mukhtaṣar* p. 262) and there is confusion as to his identity. Al-Dhahabī identifies him as Ma‘mar ibn Aḥmad [ibn Muḥammad] ibn Zyād Abū Manṣūr al-Aṣbahānī al-Sufi and says he died in 418 cf. *al-Nujūm al-Zāhira* (4:268) while Ibn al-Subkī in *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfi‘iyya al-Wuṣṭā* cf. *Kubrā* (5:331) cites al-Silafī (474-576) as identifying another Ma‘mar as his Shaykh, Ma‘mar ibn Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ibn ‘Umar Abū Manṣūr al-Lunbānī al-Aṣbahānī al-Sufi who died in 489.

the heaven, according to him, is other than what is commonly believed. To him, neither the heaven nor the Throne bear any meaning other than the upward direction.

207 He cited from ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlī [*i.e.* al-Gilānī] (471-562) that he said: “Allāh ﷻ is in the upward direction (*bi-jihat al-‘uluw*), established (*mustawin*) over His Throne.”<sup>424</sup>

208 I truly wonder why he used his words as proofs and left out those of such as Ja‘far al-Šādiq, al-Shiblī, al-Junayd, Dhū al-Nūn al-Miṣrī, Ja‘far ibn Nuṣayr, and their likes – Allāh ﷻ be well-pleased with them!

209 As for what he cited from Abū ‘Umar ibn ‘Abd al-Barr, both the elite and general public know the man’s position and its disapproval by the Ulema.<sup>425</sup> The Mālikīs’ condemnation of it, from the first to the last of them, is well-known. His contravention (*mukhālafa*) of the Imām of North Africa, Abū al-Walīd al-Bājī, is famous.<sup>426</sup> It reached a point where the eminent people of North Africa would say: ‘No one in North Africa holds this position except he and Ibn Abī Zayd (310-386)’ although some of the people of knowledge cited an excuse for Ibn Abī Zayd in the text of the great Qāḍī Abū Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Wahhāb [ibn ‘Alī ibn Naṣr] al-Baghdādī al-Mālikī (d. 422)<sup>427</sup> – Allāh have mercy on him.

<sup>424</sup> *Ḥamawīyya* (p. 476-477) = *Majmū‘ al-Fatāwā* (5:85 cf. 3:222, 3:264). Narrated in al-Gilānī’s *Ghunya* (Lahore: al-Maṭba‘at al-Islāmiyya, 1322/1904) p. 121-128 but there are known problems of textual integrity with that book cf. Article, “The Innovated Phrase ‘In Person’” in our *Sunna Notes* series. Note that al-Dhahabī in his ‘*Uluw*’ (p. 571 cf. *Mukhtaṣar* p. 283 §348) omits the phrase “in the upward direction.”

<sup>425</sup> See “The ‘Descent’ of Allāh” in our *Sunna Notes* series and *The Ash‘arī School*.

<sup>426</sup> Imām Abū al-Walīd al-Bājī, Sulaymān ibn Khalaf al-Mālikī al-Qurṭubī, see our volume *The Ash‘arī School*.

<sup>427</sup> Perhaps a reference to his commentary on Ibn Abī Zayd’s *Risāla* (cf. Ibn Farḥūn, *al-Dibāj al-Mudhahhab* p. 262).

To proceed, he [Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr] said, “Allāh ﷻ is in the 210  
 heaven, on the Throne, above seven heavens”<sup>428</sup> but he did not  
 pin down what is meant by “in the heaven, on the Throne, above  
 seven heavens” (*lā ya‘qil mā ma‘nā fil-samā’ ‘alā al-‘arsh min  
 fawqī sab‘i samāwāt*).

[79] Further, Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr neither interpreted those terms 211  
 figuratively, nor said anything like the impostor’s claim that  
 what is meant by the Throne and the heaven is but the upward  
 direction.

Then he cited from al-Bayhaqī – Allāh have mercy on him! – 212  
 something unrelated to the discussion, after which he reiterated  
 the statements of those who were mentioned previously.<sup>429</sup>

<sup>428</sup> *Hamawīyya* (p. 479) = *Majmū‘ al-Fatāwā* (5:86). Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr, *Tamhīd* (7:129).

<sup>429</sup> *Hamawīyya* (p. 482-487) = *Majmū‘ al-Fatāwā* (5:87-89). Ibn Taymiyya cites al-Bayhaqī’s narrations of the ḥadīths affirming the Hand and Hands in *al-Asmā’ wal-Ṣifāt* but omits to show the Imām’s emphatic rejection of any anthropomorphic interpretation of these texts. Al-Bayhaqī said in that chapter: “Some of the keenest scholars have said that the Right (*al-yamīn*) signifies the Hand (*al-yad*), and the Palm (*al-kaff*) likewise, in the sense that the hand for Allāh is an Attribute, not a limb. Thus, every passage that mentions it in the Book and the authentic Sunna carries a meaning in connection with the object of mention such as folding up, taking, seizing, spreading, sweeping, accepting, giving, and other acts connecting the personal Attributes to what those attributes entail, without touch nor contact. There is never in all this any likeness between Allāh ﷻ and creation whatsoever. Others have said that the handful (*al-qabḍa*) [in the verse {*The whole earth is His handful on the Day of Resurrection*} (39:67)] may be by means of a limb – exalted is Allāh beyond that! – while others said that it may mean dominion (*al-mulk*) and power (*al-quḍra*) [...] as in His saying: {*From among those whom your right hands possess*} (30:28) which signifies property. It was also said that by the verse {*And the heavens are rolled in His right hand*} (39:67) is meant that the heavens are bound to disappear according to his oath. That is, He swore an oath to abolish them. [...] About the Prophet’s ﷺ ḥadīth: ‘No one spends something good in charity – and Allāh accepts nothing but good – except the Merciful takes it with His right hand (*yamīnih*), if only a date; it increases in the palm of the Merciful (*kaff al-Raḥmān*) until it exceeds the size of a mountain, just as one of you makes his parcel of land productive’ [narrated from Abū Hurayra by Muslim, Aḥmad, al-Nasā’ī, Ibn Mājah, and al-Tirmidhī who said it is *ḥasan saḥīḥ*]: his saying “The Merciful’s palm’ (*kaff*) means His dominion and sovereignty according to the keenest scholars.” *Al-Asmā’ wal-Ṣifāt* (Kawtharī ed. p. 330-331; Ḥāshidī ed. 2:159-160).

213 After this, he mentioned our Shaykh, Abū al-Ḥasan ‘Alī ibn Ismā‘īl al-Ash‘arī and his words: “{*The Merciful established Himself over the Throne*} (20:4) and we do not make bold before Allāh ﷻ in our speech but simply say ‘He established Himself,’ without asking how.”<sup>430</sup>

214 These words which he related from our Shaykh are our creed and our doctrine. However, I do not view his citing them as other than a ploy designed to falsely suggest that the Shaykh subscribes to the doctrine of upward direction for Allāh ﷻ. If this is indeed the case, then he truly went far in calumny!

<sup>430</sup> *Ḥamawīyya* (p. 496) = *Majmū‘ al-Fatāwā* (5:92). In al-Ash‘arī, *Maqālāt al-Islāmiyyīn* (1:211). Imām al-Ash‘arī is ‘Alī ibn Ismā‘īl ibn Abi Bishr Ishāq ibn Salīm, Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ash‘arī al-Yamānī al-Baṣrī al-Baghdādī (260-324 or 330), a descendent of the Yemeni Companion Abū Mūsā al-Ash‘arī. In the first half of his scholarly career he was a disciple of the Mu‘tazilī teacher Abū ‘Alī al-Jubbā‘ī, whose doctrines he abandoned in his fortieth year after asking him a question al-Jubbā‘ī failed to resolve over the issue of the supposed Divine obligation to abandon the good for the sake of the better (*al-ṣālīh wal-aṣlah*). At that time he adopted the doctrines of the *ṣifatiyya*, those of *Ahl al-Sunna* who assert that the Divine Attributes are obligatorily characterized by perfection, unchanging, and without beginning, but He is under no obligation whatsoever to abandon the good for the sake of the better. [Cf. al-Shahrastānī, *al-Milal wal-Niḥal* (1:93=1961 ed. p. 118-119); Ibn al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfi‘iyya al-Kubrā* (3:356), and Nūr al-Dīn Aḥmad ibn Maḥmūd al-Ṣābūnī (d. 1184), *al-Bidāya min al-Kifāya fī Uṣūl al-Dīn*.] He left Baṣra and came to Baghdād, where he took *fiqh* from the Shāfi‘ī jurist Abū Ishāq al-Marwazī (d. 340). [Abū Ishāq al-Isfarāyīnī and Ibn Fūrak considered al-Ash‘arī a Shāfi‘ī in *fiqh* cf. Ibn Qāḍī Shuhba, *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfi‘iyya* (1:115) while Ibn Abi al-Wafā in *al-Jawāhir al-Muḍīyya* (p. 247) deems him Ḥanafī.] He devoted the next twenty-four years to the refutation of “the Mu‘tazila, the Rāfiḍa, the Jahmiyya, the Khawārij, and the rest of the various kinds of innovators” in the words of al-Khaṭīb in *Tārīkh Baghdād* (11:346). His student Bundār related that his yearly expenditure was a meager seventeen dirhams. The founder of the Egyptian “Salafi” Press, Munīr ‘Abduh Aghā wrote in his *Namūdhaj min al-A‘māl al-Khayriyya* (p. 131-134): “Al-Ash‘arī became the signpost of Sunni Knowledge in his time until his word became synonymous, since his time, with the position of *Ahl al-Sunna wal-Jamā‘a*.” More in our volume on the Ash‘arī School in *shā Allāh*.



The actual words of the Shaykh in this regard are as follows: “He was when there was no place; then He created the Throne and the *kursī* without ever being in need of place, and He is, after creating place, exactly as He was before creating it.”<sup>431</sup> His and his companions’ statements in declaring false [the concept of direction] can hardly be numbered. 215

Then he [Ibn Taymiyya] cited something similar from the Qāḍī Abū Bakr [ibn al-Bāqillānī] and Imām al-Ḥaramayn.<sup>432</sup> 216

Then he clung to the fact that hands are raised [upwards] towards the heaven. 217

But that is only because the heaven is the place of blessings and all good things, for light descends from it, as well as rain. When human beings become accustomed to obtaining benefits from a certain side, their natures will incline to it. That is the sense which makes it a requirement to raise our hands to the heaven, and Allāh ﷻ said: {*And in the heaven is your providence and that which you are promised*} (51:22). 218

<sup>431</sup> Al-Ash‘arī as narrated by Ibn ‘Asākir in *Tabayīn Kadhib al-Muftarī* (Saqqā ed. p. 150). During one of his trials Ibn Taymiyya quoted from this book and said it was peerless: *Majmū‘ al-Fatāwā* (3:182 cf. 3:224) and Ibn ‘Abd al-Hādī’s *al-‘Uqūd al-Durriyya* (p. 250).

<sup>432</sup> *Hamawiyya* (p. 508-516) = *Majmū‘ al-Fatāwā* (5:98-100). Ibn Taymiyya quotes selected paragraphs from Ibn al-Bāqillānī’s lost *al-Ibāna* then from the *Nizāmiyya* epistle of Ibn al-Juwaynī. These two Ash‘arī Ulema could not be further away from the doctrine Ibn Taymiyya attempts to defend but his method is to adduce a barrage of citations from anyone and everyone beginning, of course, with the Qur‘ān and Sunna, then “to clamor a lot about following the *Salaf*” (al-Nabhānī, *Shawāhid al-Ḥaqq* p. 207). “Salafīs” are also fond of construing a “Salafi” version of the great Sunnī *mutakallimūn* and speak of the “repentance” of Imām al-Ghazzālī from Ash‘arism, the “repentance” of al-Rāzī, Ibn al-Juwaynī, al-Ash‘arī, etc., whereas there is no such repentance on record except for Ibn Taymiyya himself [see our biographical introduction]. See on them our *Ash‘arī School*. Al-Qārī said in *Mirqāt al-Mafātīḥ* (1892 ed. 2:137=1994 ed. 3:300): “A whole group of them [the early Muslims], as well as later scholars, said that whoever believes Allāh ﷻ to be in a particular physical direction is an unbeliever, as al-‘Irāqī has explicitly stated, saying that this was the position of Abū Ḥanīfa, Mālik, al-Shāfi‘ī, al-Ash‘arī, and [Ibn] al-Bāqillānī.” Al-Qārī reiterates this *fatwā* in *Sharḥ al-Fiqh al-Akbar* (1984 ‘Ilmiyya ed. p. 57) and *Sharḥ ‘Ayn al-‘Ilm* (1989 ed. 1:34).

- 219 Furthermore, he sufficed himself with the likes of this evidence in [one of] the issues of the foundations of Islamic doctrine. Does he have surety that no [80] claimant should put forth a claim that Allāh ﷻ is in the Ka‘ba on the grounds that every worshipper directs his face to it and says,<sup>433</sup> {*I have turned my face towards Him Who created the heavens and the earth*} (6:79)? Or that some claimant should say that Allāh ﷻ is in the earth since He said: {*But prostrate yourself, and draw near (unto Allāh)*} (96:19) when it is known that drawing near by prostrating, distance-wise, can only be to the earth? Further, the Prophet ﷺ said: “The nearest [to Allāh ﷻ] that a servant can be is in his prostration.”<sup>434</sup>
- 220 Then he mentioned the parts of the narration of the mountain goats to which we already responded. Then he mentioned something that has no bearing on the issue whatsoever.
- 221 After that, he asserted that he had reported from the *Salaf* the same as his own position. In fact, he did not, so far, report from anyone anything that supports his position – not from the *Salaf*, and not from the *Khalaf*. The only exception is ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlī and some of what Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr said. From the Ten that were promised Paradise and the remainder of the Companions, he did not cite so much as a whisper.
- 222 Then he launched into sermons and supplications unrelated to the issue, after which he began to insult and revile the theologians. No barking ever harmed the moon!

<sup>433</sup> At the onset of prayer according to the Shāfi‘ī *madhhab*.

<sup>434</sup> Narrated from Abū Hurayra by Muslim, Abū Dāwūd, and al-Nasā‘ī with the continuation “Therefore, make abundant [your] supplications [at that time].”

More to the point, it is evident that this eminent savant, this proof of the Religion peppers his pronouncements with loud claims that he only says "what Allāh said as well as His Prophet and the First and Foremost among the Emigrants and Helpers." Yet he could not convey the doctrine he holds from a single Companion! 223

We have now concluded our demonstration that his words are false. We have exposed his deceit, brought an end to his equivocations, confuted his conclusions, and turned his purported signposts upside down. Let us proceed with our business and clarify our own creed. And with Allāh comes all success! 224



## CHAPTER ELEVEN

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### Imām al-Ghazzālī's Ethics of *Tawhīd*

We hold that whoever hears the verses and reports that pertain to the Divine Attributes has duties which we mentioned before.<sup>435</sup> They are: 225

- (1) to uphold Divine transcendence (*taqdīs*);
- (2) belief (*īmān*);
- (3) confirmation (*taṣdīq*);
- (4) admission of inability [to comprehend] (*al-i' tirāf bil-' ajz*);
- (5) keeping silent (*sukūt*);
- (6) refraining from paraphrasing the original wording (*al-imsāk 'an al-taṣarruf fīl-alfāz al-wārida*);
- (7) stopping all mental reflection upon such verses and reports (*kaff al-bāṭin 'an al-tafakkur fī dhālik*); and
- (8) holding firmly that whatever is unknown to us concerning them [81] is not unknown to the Prophet ﷺ nor to al-Ṣiddīq ؓ nor to the eminent senior Companions ؓ.

Let us now turn to the elucidation of the finer details enfolded within those duties, and in Allāh is all our help!

<sup>435</sup> Cf. §35.

### Upholding Divine Transcendence (*al-Taqdīs*)

226 To uphold Divine transcendence consists in the firm belief, for every verse and every report, in a meaning (*ma‘nan*) that befits the immense majesty of Allāh ﷻ.

227 An example of this is when one hears the saying of the Prophet ﷺ: “Allāh descends every night to the nearest heaven.” “Descent” (*nuzūl*) applies to a phenomenon that requires a body (*jism*) in a high position, a body in a low position, and a body that undergoes displacement from high to low, cessation (*zawāl*) being the displacement of a body from the height to a low ground.<sup>436</sup>

228 “Descent” is also applied in a different sense which requires neither displacement nor the motion of a body, as in the saying of Allāh ﷻ: {*He has sent down (anzala) for you of cattle eight kinds*} (39:6) although the cattle, of course, did not descend from the heaven but are definitely created in the wombs. “Descent” here undoubtedly bears a sense other than the motion of a body.

229 The latter sense is illustrated by the saying of al-Shāfi‘ī, “I entered Egypt and they did not understand my discourse so I came down; then I came down some more; then I came down even more.” He did not mean by that a displacement from a high to a low ground.

<sup>436</sup> See “Allāh’s ‘Descent’” in our *Sunna Notes* series.

Let the listener be sure, therefore, that “descent” does not apply 230  
 in the first sense in relation to Allāh ﷻ. For corporeality (*al-jism*) is inconceivable in relation to Him. And since [His] *nuzūl* is not understood as displacement, we can say to the listener, “Whoever is incapable of understanding the descent of the camel [in the verse cited above] is even less able to understand the descent of Allāh ﷻ.” There are allusions to this fact in the words of ‘Abd al-‘Azīz al-Mājshūn previously quoted.

The same applies with the term “above” (*fawq*) which comes 231  
 up in the Qur’ān and the reports. Let it be understood that “above” sometimes refers to corporeality (*jismiyya*) and sometimes to status (*martaba*) as already mentioned.

In conclusion, let it be emphasized, first of all, that corpo- 232  
 reality is inconceivable of Allāh ﷻ; secondly, “above” has a sense that befits His immense majesty. [82]

#### Belief (*al-Īmān*) and Confirmation (*al-Taṣdīq*)

Belief and confirmation consist in knowing that the Messenger 233  
 of Allāh ﷻ is truthful in his description of Allāh ﷻ in these reports and that what he said is the undoubted truth in the sense that he meant and the exact manner in which he said it, even if one cannot determine its actual meaning (*wa-in kāna lā yaqifu ‘alā ḥaqīqatīhi*).

Beware, lest someone fall prey to Satan and say: “Why should 234  
 I consider truthful a matter of a general nature, the specifics of which I am not aware of?” Instead, let one put Satan to shame and reply, “Just as if a truthful person were to tell me that there is an animal in the house and I would know its presence there even if I had not experienced it specifically, the same applies here.”

Admission of Incapacity (*al-I' tirāfu bil-' Ajz*)

- 235 Further, let the skeptic know that the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ said: "I cannot render count of Your Glory! (*lā uḥṣī thanā'an 'alayk*) You are just as You have glorified Yourself."<sup>437</sup> The Master of the Truthful Saints similarly said: "Incapacity to attain comprehension is comprehension" (*al-'ajzu 'an darki al-idrāki idrākun*).<sup>438</sup>
- 236 It is obligatory upon anyone who has not come to know the true sense of these expressions to admit incapacity. If one claims knowledge, one will be held accountable for such a claim. As much as any person of knowledge may know, what they know not is more!

Keeping Silent (*al-Sukūt*)

- 237 Keeping silent is obligatory for the general public (*al-'awāmm*). Their enquiring exposes them to something they cannot bear. If they ask an ignoramus about it, the latter will increase the questioner's ignorance; if they ask a person of knowledge, the latter cannot make the questioner understand, just as an adult cannot make a child understand sexual pleasure or the management of domestic affairs. The only way to make a child understand [husbandry] is through practice.

<sup>437</sup> Narrated from 'Ā'isha and 'Ali in the Nine Books except al-Bukhārī and Dārimī.

<sup>438</sup> See note 286.



Therefore, if a person who is unlearned in the Religion (‘*āmmī*) asks about the like of this, he must be reprimanded and deterred. Tell him, “This is not for you – shoo!” Thus did Mālik order his questioner to be taken out with the words, “I think you are nothing but an evil-monger!” And Mālik said so after becoming drenched in sweat. 238

Similarly did ‘Umar ؓ treat anyone who dared enquire about the ambiguous verses of the Qur’ān.<sup>439</sup> The Prophet ﷺ said: “Those before you perished only because they asked too many questions.”<sup>440</sup> 239

We have been ordered to refrain from investigating the fore-ordained Decree of Allāh ﷻ – then what about the Divine Attributes! 240

<sup>439</sup> During ‘Umar’s caliphate a man from Iraq named Ṣabīgh ibn ‘Isl came to Madīna and began to ask about the meaning of the ambiguous verses (*mutashābihāt*) of the Qur’ān. ‘Umar summoned him. When he came he asked him: “Who are you?” He replied: “I am the servant of Allāh, Ṣabīgh.” ‘Umar said: “And I am the servant of Allāh, ‘Umar.” Then he struck him on the head with a birch, sending Ṣabīgh into a daze. He went on until his head bled. Then Ṣabīgh said: “Commander of the believers, stop! No trace remains of what was in my head.” Narrated from Sulaymān ibn Yasār with a sound chain by al-Dārimī and cited by al-Qurṭubī in his commentary on the verse {*He it is Who has revealed unto you (Muḥammad) the Scripture wherein are clear revelations; they are the substance of the Book; and others (which are) allegorical. But those in whose hearts is doubt pursue that which is allegorical seeking (to cause) dissension by seeking to explain it*} (3:7). Imām Mālik narrated in his *Muwaṭṭa’* from Ibn Shihāb al-Zuhri, from al-Qāsim ibn Muḥammad who said: “I heard a man asking ‘Abd Allāh ibn ‘Abbās about the spoils of war. The latter answered: ‘Horses are part of the spoils of war, and the battle-gear and property carried by the enemy killed in battle (*al-salab*):’ Then the man asked the same question again and Ibn ‘Abbās gave the same answer. Then the man said: ‘The spoils Allāh mentioned in His Book, what are they?’ and he did not stop asking him until he almost created a nuisance for him. Then Ibn ‘Abbās said: ‘Do you know what this man’s similitude is? He is like Ṣabīgh whom ‘Umar beat up.’” All those who invent litmus tests of all denominations in order to examine and berate other Muslims are similar, such as “Where is Allāh?” (Wahhābis), “What do you think of Mu‘āwiya [ؓ]?” (Shī‘is), “Is not the Prophet ﷺ omnipresent?” (Barelwīs), “Did the *Ṣahāba* celebrate Mawlid?” (Deobandīs), “Is not *jihād* obsolete?” (pacifists), “Are women not equal to men?” (feminists) “Is it not time for a moratorium on *Shari‘a*?” (secularists), etc.

<sup>440</sup> Narrated from Abū Hurayra by Muslim, al-Nasā‘ī, and Aḥmad as part of a longer ḥadīth.

### Refraining from Paraphrasing (*al-Imsāk 'an al-Taṣarruf*)

241 To refrain from paraphrasing those reports and verses means to quote them exactly as spoken by Allāh ﷻ and His Prophet ﷺ without paraphrasing them, neither through explanation (*tafsīr*) nor interpretation (*ta'wīl*), nor rephrasing them through grammatical derivation (*taṣrīf*).<sup>441</sup>

242 Qur'ānic explanation must not substitute the wordings of expressions with different words nor may they stand in place of one another. For a word can be used metaphorically in a given expression at the exclusion of another, and can have a shared meaning within a certain expression at the exclusion of another. Substitution will cause discourse to become inflated by the cancellation of the metaphor and the assumption that one of the shared meanings is actually meant.

243 Qur'ānic figurative interpretation (*ta'wīl*), on the other hand, dismisses the external meaning (*al-zāhir*) and adheres to what is considered the less likely meaning (*al-marjūh*). The layman who does this has plunged into a sea without shores and cannot swim. As for the learned person, he may not do this unless he fulfills the necessary conditions of figurative interpretation. He

<sup>441</sup> An example of forbidden *taṣrīf* is to derive from the verses of *istiwā'* the inference that Allāh Most High is *mustawin* or "established" over the Throne. Such an Attribute is not ordained by Allāh ﷻ (*ghayr tawqīfī*) even if inferred from the Divine act of *istiwā'*. Someone actually compiled a book on the Divine Names in which he entitled one of his chapters "The Wrathful Obliterator" (*al-Mudamdīm*) which he derived from the verse "*fa-damdama 'alayhim rabbuhum*" (91:14)!

must not discuss it with a layman as the latter is incapable of comprehending it.

### Ceasing Cogitation (*Kaff al-Bāṭin*)

Ceasing to think about it [the meaning of the Attributes] is so that one not be preoccupied with something that may amount to disbelief and which one may become unable to dismiss – nor can anyone else dismiss it from him.<sup>442</sup> 244

### Believing Firmly in the Knowledge of the Prophet ﷺ

#### (*I' tiqād 'Ilm al-Nabī ﷺ*)

Let one know with firm conviction that the Prophet ﷺ knows all this [*i.e.*, the meanings]. Let none compare himself to the Prophet ﷺ, nor to his Companions, nor to the major Ulema [in this respect]. Hearts are vessels of varying capacity and gems of varying intensity. 245

<sup>442</sup> Most helpful here is the rule spelled out toward the end of Imām Abū Ḥanīfā's *al-Fiqh al-Akbar*: "If someone experiences difficulty with the subtleties of the science of Divine unity, it is incumbent upon him to believe (without further investigation) what is correct in the sight of God Most High until he finds a scholar to consult. He should not delay in seeking such a scholar, for hesitation and suspension of judgment may result in unbelief." (Translation by Hamid Algar.)



## CHAPTER TWELVE

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### *Kalām* Dialectic in the Qurʾān and the Rejection of Imitation

We proceed with two points. The first<sup>443</sup> is the upholding of transcendence beyond any notion of direction. We have seen that the literalists have searched in vain in the narrations and reports. The reader is well apprised of what is in them. They have not been able to find one Companion nor one Successor who says what they say. Even so, men are known by the fact that they hold fast to the truth. Truth is not known by discovering what men hold.<sup>444</sup>

246

Abū Dāwūd narrated in his *Sunan* from Muʿādh [84] that the latter said: “Accept the truth from whoever states it, even if he is a disbeliever” (*kāfir*) – or he said: “even if he is a transgressor” (*fāsiq*) – “and beware the error of the wise man.” They asked: “How will we know that the disbeliever is telling the truth?” He replied: “Truly, light shines over the truth.”<sup>445</sup> He spoke the truth – may Allāh be well-pleased with him!

247

<sup>443</sup> The second point is mentioned in §281.

<sup>444</sup> More than that, as our teacher Dr. Nūr al-Dīn ʿItr says, when asked about Ibn Taymiyya: “The mistakes of the great are the greatest mistakes.”

<sup>445</sup> Narrated from Muʿādh *mawqūf* with a sound chain by Abū Dāwūd but with the word “hypocrite” (*munāfiq*) rather than “disbeliever” or “transgressor;” al-Ḥākim (4:466 *ṣaḥīḥ* per Muslim’s criterion), and al-Bayhaqī in the *Sunan al-Kubrā* (10:210).

248 Indeed, if the necklace of imitation were placed on every neck, we would no longer be safe lest some disbeliever bring us whatever is held in great esteem in his community and tell us, "Know the truth by this."

249 Now that the reader realizes that those [literalists] cannot be relied upon for pure transmission, know that Allāh ﷻ addresses none other than those who possess minds, hearts, and insights. The Qur'ān is replete with this affirmation. The mind is the appraiser of the existence of Allāh ﷻ and His Oneness, and the mind is the demonstrator of the Message of His Prophet ﷺ. For there is no way to establish all this through transmission. Hence, the Law has declared the mind trustworthy and accepted its testimony, and Allāh ﷻ has used the mind as a proof in certain passages of His Book.

250 For example, Allāh ﷻ used the fact of man's original creation as a [rational] proof for man's [forthcoming] resurrection. He said: *{And he has coined for Us a similitude and has forgotten the fact of his creation, saying: Who will revive these bones when they have rotted away? Say: He will revive them Who first produced them!}* (36:78-79). With these verses Allāh ﷻ destroyed the findings of the philosophers who deny bodily resurrection.

251 Allāh ﷻ also used the mind as a proof for absolute Divine Oneness when He said, *{If there were therein Gods beside Allāh, then verily both the heavens and the earth would have been disordered}* (21:22). He also said, *{Nor is there any God along with Him, else would each God have assuredly championed that which he created, and some of them would assuredly have overcome others}* (23:91). He also said, *{Have they not considered the dominion of the heavens and the earth?}* (7:185). And He said, *{Say: Behold what is in the heavens and the earth!}* (10:101). [85]

And He said, {*Say: I exhort you unto one thing only: that you awake, for the sake of Allāh, in pairs and singly, and then reflect*} (34:46). And He said, {*We shall show them Our portents on the horizon and within themselves*} (41:53).

Therefore, woe to them who reject a witness Allāh Himself accepts, and invalidate a proof put up by Him! For they cancel all such proofs and refer to the positions of their teachers! Should one of those teachers be asked about [the proof for] his Religion, he would not have the wherewithal to establish it. Should he be confronted in the dialectical battlefield he would fall silent after saying, "I heard the people say something and so I said it." The narration of the sun's eclipse in al-Bukhārī's *Ṣaḥīḥ* describes what such people say in their graves.<sup>446</sup> 252

This is why reason plays its role. It is the criterion upon which legal responsibility hangs and because of which Allāh ﷻ holds people to account. Allāh ﷻ has accepted its testimony and upheld it, establishing with it the foundations of His Religion. 253

At the same time, reason bears witness to the corruption of that school of thought [*i.e.* literalism] which has sunk to the point of describing Allāh ﷻ as endowed with defects and imperfections. Exalted is He beyond what the wrongdoers claim! 254

<sup>446</sup> Narrated from 'Ā'isha by al-Bukhārī and Muslim.





## CHAPTER THIRTEEN

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### Warnings of the Great Sufi Shaykhs against Literalism

The Shaykhs of the Path have warned about the same thing to which reason bore witness and about which the Qur'ān spoke. They did so in a manner comprehensible to the elite yet without alienating the general public. The exposition of what they said has several aspects. 255

A first demonstration is gathered from him of the pure lineage and high origin, the Master of the Ulema and inheritor of the best of Prophets, Ja'far al-Şādiq ؑ who said: "Were Allāh in something (*fī shay*"), he would be surrounded (*maḥşūr*)."447 256

[86] What this evidence stipulates is that if He were in a direction and one could point at Him, it would follow that He must have limits. For if He were in a given direction as opposed to another, then He "takes place" (*ḥaşala*) in that direction exclusively of another. His having limits could not bear any other meaning. But everything endowed with limits is contingent (*kullu mutanāhin muḥdath*), because its confinement to particular boundaries necessarily supposes someone to specify them. 257

<sup>447</sup> Cf. §31 above.

258 Through this proof – which is self-evident to the mind – appears the further proof that the attribution of direction [to the Deity] makes it necessary for the Creator to be created, for the Lord to be governed, and for His Divine Essence to be controlled (*mutaṣarrafun fihā*), subject to addition and subtraction – greatly exalted is Allāh beyond the claims of the oppressors!

259 A second demonstration is gathered from the words of al-Shiblī ؒ, the Shaykh of the Path and standard of verification, who said: “The All-Merciful exists from pre-eternity while the Throne was created, and the Throne was established and made firm (*istawā*) by the All-Merciful.”<sup>448</sup>

260 What this statement stipulates is that the specific direction Allāh ؒ possesses according to them – exalted is He beyond such a thing! – and which they named “the Throne,” is either nonexistent or existent. That it should be nonexistent is impossible by agreement. Further, direction can be pointed at with sensory gestures, and sensory gesture to something nonexistent is absurd. So it is existent. If it is existent, then [it is either with or without beginning]. If it is without beginning together with Allāh ؒ, then something other than Allāh and His Attributes has been found for us that is without beginning, so we cannot know which comes first! And this is the repulsiveness of this doctrine. And if it has a beginning, then spatial confinement (*al-tahayyuz*) has taken place for Allāh ؒ and He is therefore subject to contingent self-attributes (*ṣifāt naḥsiyya ḥāditha*) – exalted is Allāh beyond any such notion!

261 [87] A third demonstration is gathered from the spokesman of the Path, standard-bearer of the truth, physician of hearts and signpost of the Beloved, Abū al-Qāsim al-Junayd ؒ who said:

<sup>448</sup> Cf. §29 above.

“How could He Whom nothing and no one resembles or compares to, ever join (*yattaşilu*) with one whom something resembles and to whom something compares?”<sup>449</sup>

What this demonstration shows is that, if He were in a direction, He is either larger, equal, or smaller [than that direction], together with the requirement of its surrounding [Him]. If He is larger, then the extent of Him that overlaps it differs from the extent of Him that lies beyond it. It follows that He is made up of parts and segments, which is impossible. Every complex thing is in need of its constituent units and its units are other than it, so every complex thing is in need of other than it, and something that is in need of something else is not a God. If He has the same extent as the direction when the latter is divisible – since it is possible to point sensorily to its constituent parts – then whatever is on par with something divisible is also divisible. If He is smaller – greatly exalted is Allāh beyond such a notion! – then He equals at least an indivisible atom (*jawharin fardin*), for they have satisfied themselves that their God is the size of an atom. No reasonable person, however, believes such a thing – although no reasonable person subscribes to their School in the first place. But such an elementary notion even an ignorant Zanzibārī would find laughable. Yet, if He is larger, then He is divisible. Look at this creed of theirs and see its conclusions! Exalted is Allāh beyond such notions.

A fourth demonstration is gathered from Ja‘far ibn Nuşayr. When he was asked about the saying of Allāh ﷻ {*The Merciful established Himself over the Throne*} (20:4), he said: “His knowledge applies equally (*istawā*) to all things, and nothing is closer to Him than something else.”<sup>450</sup>

<sup>449</sup> Cf. §25 above.

<sup>450</sup> Cf. §30 above.

264 [88] What this demonstration shows is that the attribution of directions to Him is undifferentiated ('*alā al-taswiya*); therefore, it is impermissible that He lie in a certain direction.

265 What plainly shows that the attribution of direction to Him is undifferentiated is the fact that direction, as we have already seen, is something existent, and that if such existence is without beginning together with Allāh ﷻ, it would necessarily follow that there are two pre-existent entities that are discrete in their essences (*lazima wujūdu qadīmayni mutamayyizayni bi-dhātayhimā*). If they were not discrete in their essences, then the direction would be Allāh ﷻ and Allāh ﷻ would be the direction – exalted is Allāh beyond such notions!

266 But if direction is not pre-existent, then to specify it for Him is either because His Essence requires it, in which case the Essence affects the Attributes of self (*yalzamu kawnu al-dhāti fā'ilatan fil-ṣifāti al-nafsiyya*); or because such specification is not through the Essence. In the latter case, the attribution of direction to Him is undifferentiated and to deem any direction likelier than another is a matter extraneous to His Essence which would make Him necessarily dependent on other than Him in the matter of that specification.

267 Further, to possess a specific direction is unmitigated spatial confinement (*al-ikhtiṣāsu bil-jiha huwa 'ayn al-taḥayyuz*). Such an attribute is subsistent in the essence of what is spatially confined. This would make it necessary for Him, in His very Essence, to depend on someone else, which is impossible for Allāh ﷻ!

## CHAPTER FOURTEEN

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### Leave Qur'anic Exegesis to its Experts

To conclude, know that the demonstrations we have just enumerated after receiving them from the Shaykhs of the Path they themselves only inferred from the Glorious Book. But not everything that is in the Glorious Book can be known by one and all. Each can only scoop up what his vessel can contain, no more and no less. 268

The Predecessors used to extract from the Glorious Book the foreknowledge of numerous wars and tribulations. Ibn Barraĵān [Abū al-Ḥakam 'Abd al-Salām ibn 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Muḥammad al-Andalusī al-Ishbīlī (d. 536)] – Allāh have mercy on him! – inferred [from Sūrat al-Rūm] the conquest of al-Qudus at the hand of Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn and the year he would conquer it [583].<sup>451</sup> A later scholar inferred from Sūrat al-Rūm the indication of something that would take place in the year 673. Ka'b al-Aḥbār ﷺ inferred from the Torah that 'Abd Allāh ibn 269

<sup>451</sup> Cf. al-Nu'aymī (d. 978), *al-Dāris fī Tārīkh al-Madāris* (Shams al-Dīn ed. 1:174); al-Dhahabī, *Siyar* (Risāla ed. 21:360); Ibn Kathīr, *Bidāya* (12:326-328); al-Suyūṭī, *Tārīkh al-Khulafā'* (p. 454); Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-A'yān* (4:230); Ibn 'Imād, *Shadharāt* (2:337-338); etc.

Qilāba would enter {*many-columned Iram*} (89:7) and that none other would enter it.<sup>452</sup> He would infer from it much of what was to happen to the Companions ﷺ and what the armies of Shām were to face. This is a well-known fact.

270 [89] Allāh Most High revealed in His Book that from which one of His servants might understand many things while another might not understand a single one of those things.

271 [Similarly,] levels and ranks differ in the ability to extract rulings from the words of the jurists and meanings from the compositions of the poets.

<sup>452</sup> Cf. al-Qurtubī, *Tafsīr* (20:47), Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddima* (p. 14), Yāqūt, *Mu'jam al-Buldān* (1:157), al-Shawkānī, *Fath al-Qadīr* (5:435), and al-Alūsī, *Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī* (30:123).

## CHAPTER FIFTEEN

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### Qur'ānic Proofs Negating Direction

As for what the Glorious Book said in negation of direction, it is known to the elite and the common public does not feel aversion to it. Take, for example, the verse {*there is nothing whatsoever like Him*} (42:11). If a certain direction contained Him, He would be like something contained in that part. Similarly, the verse {*Know you one that can be named like Him?*} (19:65). Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه said [it means]: "Do you know anyone like Him (*hal ta'lamu lahu mithlan*)?"<sup>453</sup> 272

The same is understood from His Name {*al-Qayyūm*} (2:255, 3:2, 20:111...) with its emphatic form, meaning that He is Self-Subsistent while everything other than Him subsists through Him. If He lay in a direction, He would subsist through something else. 273

The same is understood from His الله saying, {*al-Muṣawwir*} (59:24). If He were in a direction He would be fashioned, either by Himself or by another, both of which are impossible. 274

<sup>453</sup> Narrated from Ibn 'Abbās by Ibn Abī Ḥātim in his *Tafsīr* as cited by Ibn Ḥajar in *Fatḥh al-Bārī* (6:468) and from Mujāhid by al-Ṭabarī in his *Tafsīr* (16:106).

275 The same is understood from His ﷺ saying, {*and eight will uphold the Throne of their Lord that day, above them*} (69:17). If He were literally on the Throne, He would be carried.

276 The same is understood from His ﷺ saying, {*Everything will perish save His countenance*} (28:88). The Throne is doomed to perish, and if He ﷺ were initially not in a direction, then entered into a direction, then departed from that direction, He would be subject to change, which is impossible for Allāh ﷻ.

277 [90] Since the impostor realizes fully that the Qur'ān is replete with these facts and signs, he claims: "The probative tenor of these facts is like double-entendres (*alghāz*)!"<sup>454</sup>

278 Did this deluded man not realize that the secrets of doctrinal beliefs, which are a closed book to the minds of the common public, remain inaccessible except in such fashion? And where in the Qur'ān is the negation of anthropomorphism found except in the form of double-entendres?

279 Do sharp minds take pride in anything other than the inference of hidden meanings? For example, al-Shāfi'ī ʿ inferred Consensus (*al-ijmā'*) from the saying of Allāh ﷻ, {*And whosoever opposes the Messenger after the guidance (of Allāh) has been manifested unto him, and follows other than the believers' way, We appoint for him that unto which he himself has turned, and expose him unto hell – a hapless journey's end!*} (4:115). Juridical analogy (*qiyās*) was inferred from His saying, {*So learn a lesson, O you who have eyes*} (59:2). Similarly, al-Shāfi'ī inferred the option [of post-purchase competing negotiations] as long as the transactors have not parted (*khiyār al-majlis*), from the Prophet's ﷺ interdiction that "no man should enter competitively into a transaction which his brother is already conducting."<sup>455</sup>

<sup>454</sup> Cf. *Ḥamawiyya* (p. 240 cf. p. 272) = *Majmū' al-Fatāwā* (5:19 cf. p. 5:26).

<sup>455</sup> Narrated from Ibn 'Umar and Abū Hurayra by al-Bukhārī and Muslim.



The gist of the matter is that the Prophet ﷺ never held the public responsible for any doctrine other than *Lā ilāha illAllāh Muḥammadun Rasūlullāh*, as Mālik replied to al-Shāfi‘ī.<sup>456</sup> He ﷺ left the rest to Allāh ﷻ. Never were any but a few limited words heard from him and his Companions on that subject. This is an example of something hidden which is intimated through double-entendre. 280

<sup>456</sup> Cf. §18.



## CHAPTER SIXTEEN

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### Qur'ān and Sunna Yield No Evidence for Anthropomorphists

The second point<sup>457</sup> is the invalidation of the misrepresentations of the impostor concerning the position of the *mutakallimūn* that the Qur'ān and Sunna contain things that outwardly suggest aspects from which Allāh ﷻ is exempt and exalted. 281

We say that Allāh ﷻ said: {*He it is Who has revealed unto you (Muhammad) definitive [i.e. unabrogated and unambiguous] verses (āyāt muḥkamāt) which are the substance of the Book and others which are ambiguous (mutashābihāt). But those in whose hearts is deviance pursue the ambiguous, seeking (to cause) dissension by seeking to explain it. None knows its explanation save Allāh (\*) – and those who are of sound instruction, they say: We believe therein; the whole is from our Lord; but only possessors of understanding really heed*} (3:7).<sup>458</sup> 282

<sup>457</sup> Continuation of the first point mentioned in §246.

<sup>458</sup> "The vast majority consider that a pause comes at the Name (\*), and have declared it a mandatory pause (*waqf lāzim*). This is the literal meaning, for *ta'wīl* is the meaning which Allāh ﷻ meant, and in reality none knows that meaning except Allāh ﷻ, and there is no God beside Him. Whosoever speaks concerning its meaning is speaking only according to what is shown to him, and no one can say: 'This interpretation is what Allāh

- 283 This verse indicates that the Qur'ān contains both what is clear and what is ambiguous. Servants are instructed to turn over the interpretation of the ambiguous to {*Allāh and those who are of sound instruction*}.
- 284 This said, we can add that the reason Prophethood did not provide textual stipulations or elucidations for the ambiguities (*lam ta'ti al-nubuwwatu bil-naṣṣi zāhiran 'alā al-mutashābih*) is only [91] because the greatest part of the objective of Prophethood is the right guidance of humanity as a whole. Since most [of the Qur'ān] is unambiguous and since we have curbed the uneducated public from probing the ambiguities, the objective is met, except when Allāh ﷻ foreordains for them a devil that tempts them and leads them to destruction. If the ambiguities were all brought to light (*law uz'hira al-mutashābih*), the minds of people would be incapable of comprehending them.
- 285 Also, among the benefits of the ambiguities is [to bring out] the loftiness of the ranks of the Ulema one over another – as Allāh ﷻ said, {*and over every possessor of knowledge there is one more knowing*} (12:76) – and the obtainment of additional rewards by striving to understand them for oneself and explain them to others, learning them and teaching them.

meant' categorically." Al-Qārī, *Mirqāt al-Mafātīh* (1892 ed 2:136-137 = 1994 ed. 3:298-301). As al-Qārī goes on to say, the majority stop at the name of Allāh but both readings are possible, as stated by al-Suyūṭī in *al-Itqān* (1:264), al-Rāghib in *Mufradāt Alfāz al-Qur'ān*, Zakariyyā al-Anṣārī in *al-Muqṣid li-Talkhiṣ mā fil-Murshid* (p. 45), al-Dānī in *al-Muktafā* (p. 195-197), and others. The Prophet ﷺ defined those who are firmly grounded in knowledge partly as "Those whose oaths are kept, whose tongues are truthful, whose hearts are upright, and whose stomachs and genitals are abstinent. They are among those who are firmly grounded in knowledge." Narrated from Abū al-Dardā', Abū Umāma, Wāthila, and Anas by al-Ṭabarānī in *al-Kabīr* (8:152 §7658).

Furthermore, if these ambiguities were absolutely plain and self-evident, people would not need to learn all the sciences. They would have been abandoned. The Book would have been clear by itself and none of the auxiliary sciences would have been needed to understand His Speech. 286

Furthermore, the discourse that uses ambiguities refers to things people hold in tremendous esteem and respect, although the matter is greater yet. ‘Abd al-‘Aziz al-Mājishūn referred to this with regard to the handful (*al-qabḍa*) [in the verse {*The whole earth is His handful on the Day of Resurrection*} (39:67)].<sup>459</sup> 287

The same holds for the saying of Allāh ﷻ concerning the bliss of the people of Paradise: 288

*{Among thornless lote trees and clustered plantains, and spreading shade, and water gushing, and fruit in plenary, neither out of reach nor yet forbidden, and raised couches – Lo! We have created them a (new) creation and made them virgins, lovers, friends, for those on the right hand.}*  
(56:28-38)

All this is held in tremendous esteem and respect, although there is in Paradise greater than that.

These blessings are just as the Prophet ﷺ said on behalf of Allāh ﷻ: “I have prepared for My righteous servants what no eyes have ever seen, nor ears ever heard, nor minds ever wandered upon!”<sup>460</sup> 289

<sup>459</sup> Cf. §185.

<sup>460</sup> Narrated from Abū Hurayra by al-Bukhārī, Muslim, al-Tirmidhī (*ḥasan ṣaḥīḥ*), Ibn Mājah, Aḥmad, and al-Dārimī, and from Sahl ibn Sa‘d al-Sā‘idi by Muslim and Aḥmad. Cf. the sound saying of Ibn ‘Abbās: “There is nothing of Paradise in the lower world except the names.” Narrated by Ibn Abī Ḥātim in his *Tafsīr*, al-Bayhaqī with a good chain according to al-Mundhirī, al-Ḍiyā’ al-Maqdisī in *al-Mukhtāra* and others.

- 290 We ask Allāh the Almighty to let our final abode be in Paradise, to enlighten the vision of our hearts and eyesights, and to let this work serve solely for His most noble Countenance.
- 291 We are keeping a close watch for any other misrepresentations and corruptions of his that he might produce in the future so that we might expose his wayward paths and recalcitrance and so that we might {*strive for Allāh with the endeavor which is His right*} (22:78). And praise belongs to Allāh, Lord of the worlds!

## APPENDIX I

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### Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya

Muḥammad ibn Abī Bakr ibn Sa‘d, Shams al-Dīn Abū ‘Abd Allāh al-Zur‘ī al-Dimashqī al-Ḥanbalī, known as Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya (d. 751), was a specialist in *tafsīr*, ḥadīth, *fiqh* and its principles, Arabic philology and grammar who became the foremost student and follower of Ibn Taymiyya, whose anthropomorphic and anti-*taqlīd* teachings he helped perpetuate.

Ibn al-Qayyim followed the same path as his teacher in his infamous poem entitled *al-Qaṣīdat al-Nūniyya* (“Ode Rhyming in the Letter N”). This lengthy poem on the tenets of faith is filled with corrupt suggestions about the Divine Attributes, which Shaykh al-Islām al-Taqī al-Subkī analyzes in detail in *al-Sayf al-Ṣaqīl fīl-Radd ‘alā Ibn Zafīl* (“The Burnished Sword in Refuting Ibn Zafīl” *i.e.* Ibn al-Qayyim). Al-Subkī gave the verdict that the anthropomorphisms of the Divinity in the poem were beyond the pale of Islām. The poem could not be circulated openly in Ibn al-Qayyim’s lifetime but he never abandoned it, for the Ḥanbalī historian Ibn Rajab heard it from its author in the year of his death.<sup>461</sup>

<sup>461</sup> As stated in his *Dhayl Ṭabaqāt al-Ḥanābila* (2:448).

Today, some “Salafī” followers quote this poem indiscriminately, heedless of the deviations it promotes.<sup>462</sup>

The Ulema found other problems with Ibn al-Qayyim’s positions, among them the following innovations in the various branches of the Islamic sciences:

- In ‘*Aqīda*: see *al-Sayf al-Ṣaqīl ‘alā Nūniyyat Ibn Zafīl*, the refutation by Shaykh al-Islām Taqī al-Dīn al-Subkī of Ibn al-Qayyim’s *al-Qaṣīda al-Nūniyya* in which he commits overt anthropomorphism and ascribes the Ash‘arī School to the despised Jahmiyya. His *Hādī al-Arwāḥ*, an otherwise useful book on the description of the Hereafter, recirculates his Shaykh’s aberrant views on the finality of Hellfire.
- In *Uṣūl al-fiqh*: see ‘Allāma Ḥabīb al-Kirānawī’s 100-page point-by-point refutation – excerpted below – titled *al-Dīn al-Qayyim* in which he blasts Ibn al-Qayyim’s anti-*taqlīd* theses and revilement of the *Fuqahā’* over the issue in *I‘lām al-Muwaqqi‘īn*. In the latter book, Ibn al-Qayyim claims that Imām Aḥmad said “Whoever says there is such a thing as *Ijmā‘* has lied” yet goes on to say there is *Ijmā‘* about ten or more matters in the same book alone! It is not actually true that Imām Aḥmad said this but it is only claimed by Ibn Ḥazm that he said something interpretable as this.<sup>463</sup> (The same Ibn Ḥazm authored a large book on all the positions that form *Ijmā‘* in Islām.)

<sup>462</sup> See Shaykh Nūh Keller’s remarks in his *Reliance of the Traveller* (p. 1058).

<sup>463</sup> See the clarification on this false claim about Imām Aḥmad in ‘Abd Allāh al-Ghumārī’s *al-Sayf al-Battār li-Man Sabba al-Nabī al-Mukhtār* (Cairo: Maktabat al-Qāhira, 1996) p. 38-41, originally written against both Salman Rushdie and Nāṣir al-Albānī.



- In *Sīra*: Abū Ḥāmid ibn Marzūq, nom de plume for Shaykh Muḥammad al-‘Arabī ibn al-Tubbānī ibn al-Ḥusayn al-Idrisī al-Ḥasanī al-Jazā’irī al-Saṭīfī al-Makkī al-Mālikī (1315-1390), teacher of both Sayyid ‘Alawī ibn ‘Abbās al-Mālikī and his son Muḥammad, wrote *al-Ta‘aqqub al-Mufīd ‘alā Hadyī al-Zur‘ī al-Shadīd* (Damascus, 1387/1967) in which he listed about 49 points in which Ibn al-Qayyim erred in his *sīra* book *Zād al-Ma‘ād* in rulings pertaining to the Pillars or other topics in *‘aqīda* and *sīra*.
- In Ḥadīth: His slant in *‘aqīda* caused him to endorse forgeries and *Isrā’īliyyāt* and declare as *ṣaḥīḥ* weak reports beyond reasonable boundaries in his book *Ijtimā‘ al-Juyūsh al-Islāmiyya* in the same fashion as his Shaykh in the latter’s *Fatwā Ḥamawiyya*, *Minhāj al-Sunna al-Nabawiyya*, and other works, which detracted from both their ranks in Ḥadīth scholarship as is known among its experts. See on this Imām al-Lacknawī’s words on Ibn Taymiyya in *al-Raf‘ wal-Takmil* with Shaykh ‘Abd al-Fattāḥ Abū Ghudda’s notes. An example: “From Ibn Wahb, from Yaḥyā ibn Ayyūb, from Abū Hind, from Anas who said: The Messenger of Allāh ﷺ said: ‘Honor the cow, for truly she is the leader of the beasts of burden, she did not raise her eyes to the heaven out of shame before Allāh Most High since the calf was worshipped’”: “I [Ibn al-Qayyim] say: Attributing it to the Prophet ﷺ is not firmly established (*ghayr thābit*) because Abū Hind is unknown (*majhūl*). The point is that this [*i.e.* believing that Allāh is on top of the sky] is the primordial disposition instilled by Allāh, even in animals, and even the dumbest of them which is used to illustrate dumbness, namely, the cow”! The true verdict is not that the narration is “not firmly

established because Abū Hind is unknown” as Ibn al-Qayyim claims but rather that it is fabricated by ‘Abd Allāh ibn Wahb al-Fasawī [or Nasawī] whom Ibn Hibbān named a *dajjāl* and forger as in al-Dhahabī’s *al-Mughnī fil-Ḍu‘afā’* and *Mizān al-I’tidāl*. The above narration was therefore included among the forgeries by the Masters of ḥadīth, most of them agreeing that ‘Abd Allāh ibn Wahb had fabricated it.<sup>464</sup> Ibn al-Qayyim ignores or pretends to ignore that verdict, diverts the discussion to Abū Hind, giving the innocuous verdict “not firmly established” while nevertheless proceeding to promote his anthropomorphist doctrine on the very grounds of that narration, which is his primary purpose.

In the same vein, Ibn al-Qayyim strenuously defends the authenticity of a long unknown-chained (*musalsal bil-majāhīl*), disclaimed (*munkar*) narration on the end of times which contains the wording “In the morning, your Lord roamed the earth, all of which had been dispopulated” (*fa-sbaḥa rabbuka yaṭūfu fil-arḍi wa-khalat ‘alayhi al-bilād*).<sup>465</sup>

<sup>464</sup> Cf. al-Shawkānī in *al-Fawā'id al-Majmū'a* (al-Maktab al-Islāmī ed. p. 161 §502); al-Suyūfī in *al-La'āl' al-Maṣnū'a* (1981 ed. 2:227=2:277); Ibn al-Jawzī in *al-Mawḍū'āt* (Salafiyya ed. 3:3); al-Fattānī in *Tadhkirat al-Mawḍū'āt* (p. 152-153); al-Dhahabī in *Tartīb al-Mawḍū'āt* (§732) while in *Talkhīṣ al-Mawḍū'āt* (§642) he faults Ibn al-Jawzī's identification of ‘Abd Allāh ibn Wahb al-Nasawī and seems to believe it is ‘Abd Allāh ibn Wahb al-Fihri, which Ibn ‘Arrāq rejects in *Tanzīh al-Sharī'a* (2:238-239).

<sup>465</sup> Narrated by ‘Abd Allāh ibn Aḥmad in *al-Sunna* (Qaḥṭānī ed. 2:486=Zaghlūl ed. p. 176-179 §951) and his *Ziyādāt* to his father's *Musnad* (Risāla ed. 26:121-128 §16206), Ibn Abī ‘Āṣim in *al-Sunna* (p. 287), and al-Ṭabarānī in *al-Kabīr* (19:211-213 §477) while al-Ḥākim (4:560-564) omits the offending passage. Cf. Ibn al-Qayyim, *Zād al-Ma'ād* (3:54-57=3:588-599). Albānī twice states that its chain is “weak” in his edition of Ibn Abī ‘Āṣim (p. 231 and p. 289) whereas its optimal grading is “very weak” as implied by Ibn Kathīr's expression “*gharīb jiddan, fī ba'di al-fāzihi nakāra*” in the *Bidāya* (5:80-82) and Ibn Ḥajar's identical terms in *Tahdhīb al-Tahdhīb* (5:75 s.v. ‘Āṣim ibn Laqīṭ). In addition, al-Arna'ūṭ in his *Musnad* marginalia (26:128) mentioned that “one of those who affiliate themselves to the craft of ḥadīth in our time” (*ba'du man yantahilu šina'at al-ḥadīthi fī 'aṣrinā*), i.e., al-Albānī, adduced it to upgrade another weak ḥadīth to the rank of *ḥasan* in his *Silsila Ṣaḥīḥa* (§2810) in violation of the rule that very weak reports cannot be used to upgrade others.

In the course of his discussion he tries to boost his documentation by citing ‘Abd Allāh ibn Aḥmad, Ibn Abī ‘Āṣim, al-Ṭabarānī, Ibn Mandah, Ibn Mardūyah, Abū al-Shaykh, and Abū Nu‘aym. As Abū Ghudda points out, “he knows better than anyone else that their books are replete with weak, disclaimed, and forged reports!”<sup>466</sup> Another time, Ibn al-Qayyim adduces this very passage to support his and his teacher Ibn Taymiyya’s creed that Allāh “comes to earth on the Day of Resurrection without ceasing to remain above His heavens on His Throne” (*wa-kadhālika majrūhu ilā al-arḍi... yawma al-qiyāma... hādhā wa-huwa fawqa samāwātihi ‘alā ‘arshih*)!<sup>467</sup> Imām ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq al-Ishbīlī had warned two centuries earlier: “His saying ‘your Lord roamed the earth’ is only a periphrasis to explain (*taqrīb wa-tafhīm*) that everyone on earth will die and that it shall remain deserted.”<sup>468</sup>

Nevertheless, *Zād al-Ma‘ād* is an impressive mine of information and contains shining pages on *jihād al-naḥs* as does his *Fawā'id*. Shaykh Muḥammad ‘Akīlī served the *Ṭibb al-Nabawī* part of *Zād al-Ma‘ād* with his translation titled *Prophetic Medicine*. *Al-Manār al-Munīf* on weak and forged ḥadīths received a thoroughly researched edition by Abū Ghudda. *Madārij al-Sālikīn*, *Rawḍat al-Muḥibbīn*, and *Miftāḥ Dār al-Sa‘āda* contain benefits on *taṣawwuf*. The late Shaykh ‘Abd al-Ghanī ‘Abd al-Khāliq made use of *I‘lām al-Muwaqqi‘in* in his *Ḥujjiyyat al-Sunna* from which our monograph *The Binding Proof of the Sunna* was adapted.<sup>469</sup>

<sup>466</sup> Abū Ghudda, marginalia on al-Lacknawī’s *al-Ajwibat al-Fādila* (p. 131).

<sup>467</sup> Ibn al-Qayyim, *al-Rūḥ* (‘Ilmiyya ed. p. 102=Ibn Kathīr ed. p. 268).

<sup>468</sup> ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq al-Ishbīlī, *al-‘Āqiba* (p. 259).

<sup>469</sup> To be published as the third volume of our *Sunna Notes* series in *shā Allāh*.

Ibn al-Qayyim's "Book of the Soul" (*Kitāb al-Rūḥ*) ranks among the best books on the subject of the Islamic understanding of life after death according to the Qur'ān, the Sunna, and the doctrine of the *Salaf* and the Four Imāms, establishing without doubt that the dead hear the living and know of them. Since this hearing of the dead is a contradiction of the fundamental Wahhābī tenet that the dead cannot hear the living, mumblings are sometimes heard about the authenticity of his authorship of the book among the "Salafīs."<sup>470</sup> However, the book is undoubtedly by Ibn al-Qayyim and is attributed to him by over two dozen scholars both in his time and after.<sup>471</sup> It also contains internal proofs of his authorship, such as his mention of his own book – now lost – entitled *Ma'rifat al-Rūḥ wal-Nafs*<sup>472</sup> and his identifying two of his direct teachers as Abū al-Ḥajjāj (al-Mizzī), and Ibn Taymiyya:

"Our shaykh Abū al-Ḥajjāj, the ḥadīth Master, used to say that."<sup>473</sup>

"I heard Shaykh al-Islām, Ibn Taymiyya stress this..."<sup>474</sup>

<sup>470</sup> Cf. Albānī's remark in his notes on al-Alūsī's *al-Āyāt al-Bayyināt* (p. 22): "See the book *al-Rūḥ* attributed to Ibn al-Qayyim, for it contains the strangest and oddest narrations and opinions"! But there is virtually nothing in *al-Rūḥ* which cannot also be found or confirmed in al-Qurṭubī's *al-Tadhkira*, Ibn Rajab's *Ahwāl al-Qubūr*, 'Abd al-Ḥaqq ibn al-Kharrāṭ's *al-Āqība*, al-Suyūṭī's *Sharḥ al-Ṣudūr*, Ibn Abī al-Dunyā's *al-Qubūr*, etc.

<sup>471</sup> Al-Dhahabī (d. 748) in *al-Mu'jam al-Mukhtaṣṣ bil-Muḥaddithīn* (fo. 145), al-Ṣafadī (d. 764) in *A'yān al-Āṣr* (fo. 129) and *al-Wāfi bil-Wafayāt* (2:170-172), al-Ḥusaynī (d. 765) in *Dhayl al-Ibar* (5:282), Ibn Kathīr (d. 774) in *al-Bidāya wal-Nihāya* (14:234), Ibn Rafī' (d. 774) in *al-Wafayāt* (2:6-7), Ibn Rajab (d. 795) in *Dhayl Ṭabaqāt al-Hanābila* (2:447), Ibn Naṣīr al-Dīn (d. 842) in *al-Radd al-Wāfir* (p. 68), Ibn Ḥajar (d. 852) in *al-Durar al-Kāmina* (3:400), al-Biqā'ī (d. 885) in *Sirr al-Rūḥ* (introduction), etc.

<sup>472</sup> "We mentioned this in our large book, *Ma'rifat al-Rūḥ wal-Nafs*..." Ibn al-Qayyim, *al-Rūḥ* (1975 ed. p. 38=1998 ed. p. 125).

<sup>473</sup> Ibn al-Qayyim, *al-Rūḥ* (1975 ed. p. 37=1998 ed. p. 122).

<sup>474</sup> Ibn al-Qayyim, *al-Rūḥ* (1975 ed. p. 83=1998 ed. p. 227).

“Our shaykh said: ‘The sun itself does not descend from the heaven, and the sunrays that are on earth are neither the sun nor its attribute, but an accident (‘*araḍ*) caused by the sun and the mass (*jirm*) opposite it.’”<sup>475</sup> This is taken verbatim from Ibn Taymiyya’s notorious “Explanation of the ḥadīth of the descent of Allāh.”<sup>476</sup> Another internal proof is Ibn al-Qayyim’s lapsing into excessive criticism of Ash‘arīs and mis-attributions of spurious positions to them as is typical of him and his teacher,<sup>477</sup> although in much of his book he cites from *al-Tadhkira*, a book by the Ash‘arī scholar al-Qurṭubī.

Ibn al-Qayyim violently attacked adherence to the Four Schools of Law among traditional Sunni Muslims and voiced his anti-*madhhab* stance in a two-volume work on the principles of the Law entitled *I‘lām al-Muwaqqi‘īn*. In the latter book he rejects the evidence that the Companions and great Imāms endorsed imitation as inapplicable to later generations and instead advocates a kind of populist *ijtihād* in which every Muslim is his own Imām and is urged to apply his or her own mind toward interpreting the Qur’ān and Sunna independently, untrammelled by the burdensome qualifications in jurisprudence, language, ḥadīth methodology, and the Qur’ānic sciences that are required for *ijtihād*. It is enough refutation of this Islamically-veiled Protestantism that Imām Ibrāhīm al-Nakha‘ī said: “If the Companions ﷺ had made ablution to the wrists I swear I would have done the same, even as I read the verse of ablution as stating {to

<sup>475</sup> Ibn al-Qayyim, *al-Rūḥ* (1975 ed. p. 45=1998 ed. p. 141).

<sup>476</sup> Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmū‘ al-Fatāwā* (5:438).

<sup>477</sup> “This is a position rejected by the Book, the Sunna, the Consensus of the Companions, as well as the evidence given by reason, common sense, and Pristine Disposition, and is the position of one who does not know his own soul let alone the souls of others!” Ibn al-Qayyim, *al-Rūḥ* (1975 ed. p. 111=1998 ed. p. 286).

the elbows} (5:6).<sup>478</sup> More explicitly, al-Shāṭibī said: “The fatwās of the *mujtahids* are to the laymen what the *Sharī‘a* evidences are to the *mujtahids*.”<sup>479</sup>

The Indian jurist and ḥadīth scholar Ḥabīb Aḥmad al-Kirānawī blasted Ibn al-Qayyim’s theses in a 100-page epistle entitled *al-Dīn al-Qayyim*<sup>480</sup> in which he states:

[Ibn al-Qayyim] said: “Your claim that the imitator (*muqallid*) is closer to being right by imitating those who are more knowledgeable than he is, than by exerting his own reasoning (*ijtihād*) is an empty claim. For the *muqallid* is like a blind man who does not know whether what fell into his hand is a stick or a viper. Whereas he who leaves *taqlīd* is a *mujtahid* who has two rewards if he is correct and one reward if he is incorrect. How then can the blind man’s being right and his supposed reward compare with the seeing man’s being right, who exerts every effort?”<sup>481</sup>

The ignorance, inanity, arrogance, and hostility of the preceding words are not hidden to anyone. For he has equated the *muqallid* with a blind man and the one who leaves *taqlīd* with a seeing man although the latter is blinder than the *muqallid*. If sight consisted in leaving *taqlīd* it would follow that he who most assiduously follows his own opinion must be the most sighted of people, for he is as far from imitation as can be. And if *taqlīd* were blindness then the most assiduous follower of the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ would be the

<sup>478</sup> Ibrāhīm al-Nakha‘ī as cited by Ibn Abī Zayd al-Qayrawānī in *al-Jāmi‘ fil-Sunan* (p. 150 §18).

<sup>479</sup> As cited by Dr. Salāḥ al-Ṣāwī in his *al-Thawābit wal-Mutaghayyirāt* (Cairo: al-Muntadā al-Islāmī, 1994) p. 66.

<sup>480</sup> Included in full in his *Fawā'id fi ‘Ulūm al-Fiqh* in the second volume of the general introduction to al-Tahānawī’s *I‘lā’ al-Sunan* (2:1-99). This epistle is probably one of the most comprehensive rebuttals of “Salafī” anti-madhhabism.

<sup>481</sup> Ibn al-Qayyim, *I‘lām al-Muwaqqi‘īn* (Dār al-Jīl ed. 2:273).

blindest of people, for he is a pure imitator! Whereas the sighted one sees the truth as does the imitator, while the blind one does not see it, nor does the one who leaves imitation, following his own guidance despite the fact that he is blind and castigating anyone who might imitate the sighted and follow the latter's guidance.

As for exerting every effort, if reward depended on exerting every effort in absolute terms, then the *muqallid* has exerted every effort toward following the truth, having realized that he is incapable to do more than to imitate the knowledgeable person. How then could he be committing a sin and be deprived of reward? But if reward depended on exerting every effort in other than absolute terms then how could he who leaves *taqlid* be rewarded when he is cutting wood in the dead of night? Is this anything but absurd?

Whoever knows the conditions for being qualified to give legal responses in the Religion of Allāh according to the statements of Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal,<sup>482</sup> al-Shāfi‘ī,<sup>483</sup> and Ibn al-Mubāarak,<sup>484</sup> does not doubt at all that those who leave *taqlid* without having achieved those conditions are not allowed to give fatwā on the basis of their opinion and what they have understood of the Book and the Sunna. The reason is that their knowledge is virtually no knowledge. This is a far cry from possessing sight and obtaining reward while being wrong. For theirs is only the bane of the *ijtihād* of the non-*mujtahid*.

<sup>482</sup> See chapter on Imām Aḥmad in our *Four Imāms and Their Schools*.

<sup>483</sup> See Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ's *Adab al-Muftī wal-Mustaftī* printed before his *Fatāwā wa-Masā'il* (1:5-133).

<sup>484</sup> He [Ibn al-Mubāarak] did not give fatwā except upon the strength and on the basis of transmitted reports." 'Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn ibn Shaqīq as cited by Ibn Abī Ḥātim in his introduction to *al-Jarḥ wal-Ta'dil* (p. 262). Ibn al-Qayyim, *op. cit.*

He [Ibn al-Qayyim] also said: "The *muqallid* is closer to being right only when he knows that the correct position is with the one he is imitating exclusively of others. At that time he is not a *muqallid* for him but a follower of the evidence (*muttabi' lil-ḥujja*).<sup>485</sup> But if he does not know this at all, then how can you claim that he is closer to being right than he who has exerted his every effort and applied all his strength in searching for the truth?"<sup>486</sup>

This objection is spurious because the reason that the *muqallid* is closer to being right is that he is led by the guidance of his Imām who is a *mujtahid*. His being right is through his Imām's being right, and his being wrong is through his Imām's being wrong. This is other than the one who leaves *taqlid*, whose being right is through his own person's being right, and whose being wrong is through his own person's being wrong. Now the error of the *mujtahid* is less probable than that of the non-*mujtahid* just as his being correct is more probable than that of the non-*mujtahid*. It follows that the *muqallid* is closer to being right than the one who leaves *taqlid* as is readily apparent. This puts to rest what is being claimed by this man without understanding the meaning of what he uses for evidence.

He [Ibn al-Qayyim] also said: "The one who is nearest to being right when the Ulema are in dispute is he who adheres to the Divine command [*refer it to Allāh and the Messenger*] (4:59)] and refers to the Qur'ān and the Sunna whatsoever they dispute about. As for whoever refers the matter to the

<sup>485</sup> This reasoning is at the origin of the invented terminology of "Salafis" whereby one "should be a *muttabi'* and not a *muqallid*," and their barefaced prohibition of *taqlid* as reported of 'Id 'Abbāsī by al-Būṭi in *al-Lāmadhhabīyya* (p. 99-108).

<sup>486</sup> Ibn al-Qayyim, *op. cit.*



one he follows exclusively of others, how can he be closer to being right?"<sup>487</sup>

This is worthless sophistry. It is those who are in dispute who are commanded to refer to Allāh ﷻ and the Messenger ﷺ. So when the Ulema dispute, it is incumbent upon them to refer to Allāh ﷻ and the Messenger ﷺ. But if the ignorant dispute, such as the *muqallid* and other than the *muqallid*, then their referring to Allāh ﷻ and the Messenger ﷺ cannot take place except through referral to the 'ālim who knows the Book and the Sunna – not to the Book and the Sunna themselves, for they are ignorant of them. Else, it would necessarily follow that the ignoramus is the arbiter among the Ulema, and nothing is more patently false than such a claim. It is all-too-apparent that what he said is pure sophistry, and it stems from failing to meditate on the Qur'ān.<sup>488</sup>

In his *Ḍawābit al-Maṣlaḥa*, Dr. Sa'īd al-Būṭī showed that Ibn al-Qayyim blatantly contradicts himself in *I'lām al-Muwaqqi' in* by violently rejecting *khul'* as a legal loophole (*hīla shar'iyya*) – in order to avoid the finality of a triple divorce – yet, a few pages later, he recommends the very same loophole.

Ibn al-Qayyim wrote much on *taṣawwuf*, with which he evidently felt strong affinities. In *Miftāḥ Dār al-Sa'āda* he states:

'*Ilm al-yaqīn* is the first level of the levels of certitude and consists in its knowledge and full awareness. It is an unveiling of the object of knowledge to the heart, by which the latter beholds it without the least doubt, just like the unveiling of the visible to the eye. '*Ayn al-yaqīn* is a second

<sup>487</sup> Ibn al-Qayyim, *op. cit.*

<sup>488</sup> Al-Kirānawī, *al-Dīn al-Qayyim* in the second volume of the general introduction to al-Tahānawī's *I'lām al-Sunan* (2:62-63).

level, but related to the eye, just as the first level is related to the heart. *Ḥaqq al-yaqīn* is a third level consisting in the direct apprehension of the object of knowledge and its full, complete experience.<sup>489</sup>

He wrote an extensive commentary on al-Harawī al-Anṣārī's slim Sufi manual entitled *Manāzil al-Sā'irin ilā al-Ḥaqq* which he named *Madārij al-Sālikīn* and in which he said:

Religion is all moral character (*khuluq*), and whoever bests you in moral character, bests you in Religion. It is the same with *taṣawwuf*. Al-Kattānī said: *Taṣawwuf* is moral character, and whoever bests you in moral character, bests you in Religion [...] Truly, the hardest thing for human nature is the modification of the moral qualities and traits with which the selves have been stamped. Those who earnestly engaged in harsh discipline and arduous strivings worked on nothing else. Most of them did not succeed in changing the self, but the latter became fully employed in those exercises and thus unable to wield its influence [...] One day I asked Shaykh al-Islām Ibn Taymiyya – may Allāh have mercy on him! – about this matter and how to eliminate defects and occupy oneself with the cleansing of one's path. The gist of his reply was that the self is like a garbage pile: the more you dig in it, the more of it comes out to the surface; if you can pave a pathway over it and go past it, do so, and do not preoccupy yourself with digging into it for you shall never reach its bottom! [...] *Taṣawwuf* is one of the cornerstones (*zawāyā*) of true way-faring (*al-sulūk al-ḥaqīqī*) and the purification and disciplining of the self (*tazkiyat al-naḥs wa-tahdhībuhā*) so that it may

<sup>489</sup> Ibn al-Qayyim, *Miftāḥ Dār al-Sa'āda* (p. 149).

prepare itself for its journey to the company of the Highest Assembly and for being together with its beloved. For “one is with the one he loves”<sup>490</sup> as Sumnūn stated: “The lovers of Allāh have gained the honor of both the world and the hereafter, for ‘one is with the one he loves.’” And Allāh knows best.<sup>491</sup>

<sup>490</sup> A mass-transmitted ḥadīth of the Prophet ﷺ narrated from fifteen Companions – as stated by al-Kattānī in *Naẓm al-Mutanāthir* – in the Nine Books.

<sup>491</sup> Ibn al-Qayyim, *Madārij al-Sālikīn* (2:307). A Wahhābī bowdlerized this work and re-published it as *Tahdhīb Madārij al-Sālikīn*.



## APPENDIX II

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### Shaykh Wahbī Sulaymān Ghāwji al-Albānī A Brief Bio-Bibliography<sup>492</sup>

Shaykh Wahbī ibn Sulaymān ibn Khalīl Ghāwji al-Albānī was born in 1332 CE (1343) in Skudera, the former capital city of Albania. He attended classes and learnt the Qurʾān and what is called “the science of states, *ʿIlm al-Ḥāl*, which includes the books of doctrine and morals for us Ḥanafīs.” His first teacher and certifier in the Islamic Sciences was his father Shaykh Sulaymān, who narrates from the *Shuyūkh* of Albania.

His secondary studies came to an end when King Aḥmad Ṭūghū made it the law for students to wear the *baretta*.<sup>493</sup> He said: “We migrated to Shām, after which, my father sent me to Egypt and I stayed there for ten years. I learnt Arabic and received a degree from the Faculty of Sharīʿa and a specialized degree in Islamic judgeship. I attended the courses of Imām Muḥammad Zāhid al-Kawtharī (in exile from Turkey) whose

<sup>492</sup> Biographical part as told by Shaykh Wahbī in his Damascus home to G.F. Haddad and ʿAbd al-Hafīdh Wentzel in the month of Rabīʿ al-Awwal, 1427 / April 2006.

<sup>493</sup> From the French *béret*, a round, flat-shaped hat still worn nowadays by many Muslims in the Balkan region, similar to the type Atatürk made compulsory for the Turkish population when he took over and forbade the turban and fez.

hand I was honored to kiss and who handed me his *thabat* or record of authorities (*al-Taḥrīr al-Wajīz fī-mā Yabtaghīhi al-Mustajīz*). However, I narrate from him only through the intermediaries of Shaykh Muḥammad ‘Alī al-Murād al-Ḥamawī and Shaykh ‘Abd al-Fattāḥ Abū Ghudda al-Ḥalabī, Allāh have mercy on all of them!” He described al-Kawtharī as “a Sign of Allāh in learning, modesty and abstinence, as if he were a king walking in the street.” This is how we see Shaykh Ghāwījī also.

In 1948 CE he was appointed as a religious teacher in the governmental schools in Damascus, a post he retained until 1980 CE, at which time he left Syria and moved to the Ḥijāz. After several years in al-Madinat al-Munawwara he moved to the United Arab Emirates where he was appointed a lecturer at the Faculty of Islamic Studies and Arabic in Dubai. In 2000 CE he returned to Damascus where has been living since, teaching at Ma‘had al-Fatḥ al-Islāmī and striving to support *da‘wa* in Albania.

Among Shaykh Ghāwījī’s teachers beside those already mentioned:

Shaykh ‘Ināyat Allāh Nābī al-Shahīr al-Askūbī who narrates from his Macedonian and other *Shuyūkh*;

Shaykh ‘Abd al-Wahhāb Dibs wa-Zayt al-Ḥimṣī,

Shaykh Muḥammad Maḥmūd al-Ḥāmid, and

Shaykh Sa‘d al-Dīn al-Murād al-Ḥamawī from their Syrian and other *Shuyūkh*;

Sayyid Muḥammad al-‘Arabī ibn al-Tubbānī the author of *Barā’at al-Ḥanīfiyyīn* (published as *Barā’at al-Ash‘ariyyīn*) and

Sayyid Muḥammad ibn ‘Alawī al-Mālīkī from their Meccan and other *Shuyūkh*;

Muftī Muḥammad Shafi‘ al-‘Uthmānī,  
 his son Muftī Muḥammad al-Taḳī the continuator of Shubbīr  
 Aḥmad ‘Uthmānī’s *Fath al-Mulhim ‘alā Sharḥi Muslim*,  
 Muftī ‘Āshiq Ilāhī al-Murtahinī al-Madanī, and  
 Sayyid Abū al-Ḥasan al-Nadwī from their Indo-Pakistānī and  
 other *Shuyūkh*.

Among the works Shaykh Ghāwjī authored and published in  
 Damascus and Beirut:

*Abū Ḥanīfata al-Nu‘mān Imām al-A‘immat al-Fuqahā’*, a four-  
 hundred page biography with an edition of the *Fiqh al-Akbar*  
 which received over a half dozen editions at Dār al-Qalam. It  
 was translated into Persian and published in Teheran in  
 2003.

*Arkān al-Īmān* on the branches of faith at Mu‘assasat al-Risāla.  
*Arkān al-Islām* on the *fiqh* of the Five Pillars according to the  
 Ḥanafī School, in two volumes at Dār al-Bashā’ir al-  
 Islāmiyya.

*Al-Ḥayāt al-Ākhira: Aḥwāluḥā wa-Aḥwāluḥā wa-Ḥusn ‘Āqibati  
 al-Muttaqīna fihā bi-Faḍl Allāh wa-Raḥmatih* at Dār al-  
 Bashā’ir, on the states of the hereafter.

*Jābir ibn ‘Abd Allāh: Ṣaḥābiyyun Imāmun wa-Ḥāfizun Faqīh*, a  
 biography at Dār al-Qalam.

*Kashfu Shubuhāti Man Za‘ama Ḥilla Arbāḥi al-Qurūḍ al-  
 Maṣrafiyya* in refutation of those who declared licit bank  
 interests on loans.

*Kalimatun ‘Ilmiyyatun Hādiyatun fil-Bid‘ati wa-Aḥkāmihā* at  
 Dār al-Imām Muslim, a fine, concise study of the Sunni  
 definition of innovation.

*Maqālatun fil-Ribā wal-Fā'idat al-Maşrafiyya* at Mu'assasat al-Rayyān and Dār Ibn Ḥazm, against the legitimization of usury in all its forms.

*Al-Mar'atu al-Muslima: {Wa-Laysa al-Dhakarū kal-Unthā}* which received many editions at Mu'assasat al-Risāla and Dār al-Qalam, a study on the rulings pertaining to women in Islām.

*Masā'il fī 'Ilm al-Tawḥīd*, published in al-Shāriqa, which is epitomized at the fore of this volume and is the redacted version of his introduction to *Īdāḥ al-Dalīl* [see below].

*Min Qaḍāyā al-Mar'ati al-Muslima: Maqālāt fil-Mar'a* at Dār Ibn Ḥazm.

*Nazratun 'Ilmiyyatun fī Nisbati Kitābi al-Ibāna Jamī' ihi ilā al-Imām al-Ash'arī, wa-Yalihi Faṣṣṣun fī Khilāfāt Ahl al-Sunna wal-Khilāfāt al-Manqūla bayna al-Māturīdiyya wal-Ashā'ira* at Dār Ibn Ḥazm, a study of probable corruption in the text of al-Ash'arī's *Ibāna* followed by a review of the differences between the Ash'arīs and the Māturīdīs.

*Al-Ṣalātu wa-Aḥkāmuhā* at Mu'assasat al-Risāla, on the second pillar of Islām.

*Al-Shahādātān wa-Aḥkāmuhā* at Mu'assasat al-Risāla, on the first pillar of Islām.

*Al-Ṣiyāmu wa-Aḥkāmuh* at Mu'assasat al-Risāla, on the fourth pillar of Islām.

*Al-Taḥdhīr min al-Kabā'ir* at Amman's Dār al-Bashīr.

He also wrote important marginalia:

*Minaḥ al-Rawḍ al-Azhar* on Mullā 'Alī al-Qārī's (d. 1014) *Sharḥ al-Fiqh al-Akbar*, a classic textbook of Sunni doctrine, at Dār al-Bashā'ir al-Islāmiyya.



*Al-Ta'liq al-Muyassar* on Shaykh Ibrāhīm al-Ḥalabī's (d. 956) recension of Ḥanafī *fiqh*, *Multaqā al-Abḥur*.

*Muqaddima fī 'Ilm al-Tawḥīd*, a long introduction to *Īdāḥ al-Dalīl fī Qaṭ'ī Ḥujajī Ahl al-Ta'ṭīl* by the Shāfi'ī Egyptian Qāḍī Badr al-Dīn Ibn Jamā'a (694-767), at Cairo's Dār al-Salām, a defense of Sunni doctrine against over-interpreters and anthropomorphists.

On al-Qāsim ibn Sallām's *Faḍā'il al-Qur'ān* at Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya.

On the Ḥāfiẓ Murtaḍā al-Zabīdī's (1140-1205) two-volume '*Uqūd al-Jawāhir al-Munīfa fī Adillat Madhhab al-Imām Abī Ḥanīfa* on the Ḥanafī proof-texts at Mu'assasat al-Risāla, which Abū Ghudda identified as '*Iqd al-Jawāhir* in his biobibliographical introduction to al-Zabīdī's *Bulghat al-Arib fī Muṣṭalaḥi Āthār al-Ḥabīb* ۞.

On al-Kawtharī's (1296-1391) *Maḥq al-Taḡawwul fī Mas'alat al-Tawassul* and Ḥāfiẓ Muḥammad 'Ābid al-Sindī's (d. 1257) *Ḥawla al-Tawassul wal-Istighātha* at Dār al-Bashā'ir, both of them written to clarify the Sunni ruling on using intermediaries and intercessors as opposed to the neo-Mu'tazilīs who deny or downgrade this ruling.

He also wrote prefatory material for the following works:

'Abd al-Karīm Tattān and Muḥammad Adīb al-Kilānī's *Sharḥ Jawharat al-Tawḥīd* in two volumes at Dār al-Bashā'ir, together with Shaykh 'Abd al-Karīm al-Rifā'ī.

Khaldūn Makhlūṭa's 600-page *Aḥwāl al-Abrār 'inda al-Iḥtiḍār* at Dār al-Bashā'ir, on the states of the pious at the threshold of death, which vastly expands on al-Rabā'ī's (d. 379) slim *Waṣāyā al-'Ulamā' 'inda Ḥuḍūr al-Mawt*.

The Amman edition of Imām al-Lacknawī's (d. 1304) *Naqd Awhām Şiddīq Ḥasan Khān* at Jordan's Dār al-Fatḥ, whose original title is *Ibrāz al-Ghayy al-Wāqi' fī Shifā' al-'Ayy*.

The translator was honored to read with Shaykh Ghāwījī the *Fiqh al-Akbar*, the *Waşiyya*, the *Ṭahāwiyya*, and the *Nasafiyya*. May Allah preserve him and continue to benefit the *Umma* with him, and to Allah the Lord of the worlds belong all praise and thanks.

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## WORKS BY GIBRIL FOUAD HADDAD

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At Al-Qurʿān wal-Sunna Association (AQSA), Birmingham:

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Al-Mālīkī, Muḥammad ibn ʿAlawī. *The Life of Prophets in their Graves. Bilingual (Forthcoming).*

*Mawlid: Celebrating the Birth of the Holy Prophet ﷺ.*

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*Sunna Notes III: The Binding Proof of the Sunna.* Foreword by Dr. Muḥammad Saʿīd al-Būṭī. With Ibn Ḥajar's *The Ḥadīth of Gibril* ﷺ (Forthcoming).

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*The Four Imāms and Their Schools: Abū Ḥanīfa, Mālīk, al-Shāfiʿī, Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal.* Foreword by Shaykh Yūsuf Hāshim al-Rifāʿī.

#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Aḥmad ibn Muḥyī al-Dīn Yaḥyā al-Kilābī al-Ḥalabī *thumma* al-Dimashqī al-Shāfi‘ī al-Ash‘arī, known as Ibn Jahbal (670-733), is described in al-Dhahabī’s *Siyar A‘lām al-Nubalā* as “the erudite scholar, the guiding leader of Muslims” and in his *Ibar fi Khabari Man ‘Abar* as “The muftī of the Muslims.” He took *fiqh* from Abū al-Faraj Sharaf al-Dīn al-Maqdisī, al-Ṣadr ibn al-Wakil, Ibn al-Naqīb, Muḥammad ibn ‘Umar Ṣadr al-Dīn ibn al-Muraḥḥal al-‘Uthmānī, and ḥadīth from Abū al-Ḥasan ibn al-Bukhārī, ‘Umar ibn ‘Abd al-Mun‘im ibn al-Qawwās, Aḥmad ibn Hibat Allāh ibn ‘Asākir, and others. He narrated in Makka, Madīna, al-Qudus, and Damascus. He taught at the Ṣalāḥiyya School in al-Qudus then moved to Damascus where he assumed the headmastership of Dār al-Ḥadīth at al-Zāhiriyya. When the headmaster of the Bādīrā’iyya School died, he replaced him while al-Dhahabī took over Dār al-Ḥadīth. He died in Damascus at age sixty-three and was buried in Maqbarat al-Ṣūfiyya.

#### ABOUT THE TRANSLATOR

Dr. Gibril Fouad Haddad was born in Beirut in 1380/1960. He embraced Islam while a graduate student in French literature at Columbia University in New York. He studied the sacred sciences for over a decade with the foremost scholars of Syria. He lives in Brunei. Since 1997 he has published many translations of classical texts by the living masters of the past and present.



This short theological tract, *Fi Nafi al-Jiha*, or *On Denying Direction to God*, by the Ash'ari theologian and celebrated Shafi'i jurist, Qadi Ibn Jahbal (d. 733/1333), is a clinical rebuttal of the controversial *fatwa*, the *'Aqida Hamawiyya*, penned by his legendary contemporary, Ibn Taymiyya (d. 728/1328). It is considered, rightly, a classic manifesto of anti-literalism, which will be an indispensable reference for advanced students of Islamic theology, other professional theologians, and modern academics needing primary source materials in English or a source book on the controversies surrounding Ibn Taymiyya's theology.

This same work embodies, moreover, a contemporary exercise in polemic representing the longstanding views in the conformist tradition of Muslim theology, whether via *ta'wil* or *tafwid*, and whether in the schools of the Ash'aris, Maturidis or Hanbalis. In particular, it pits itself against one of the two opposite non-conformist readings of the Qur'an and Sunna; and in general, it highlights the pitfalls of a literalistic mindset which plagues all scripturally-based religions.

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The learned Dr. Gibril Fouad Haddad merits the rewards of the one who corrects the errors which crept into some minds in the Ummah, reminding them once again of the saving, mainstream discourse of the Ummah in the understanding of the most fundamental matters of the faith, guaranteed by Allah to exist until the end of time. May Allah reward him most abundantly for his enterprise.

His translation of Ibn Jahbal al-Kilabi's *al-Raddu 'ala Man Qala bil-Jiha* is elegant and accurate, marked by a strong sense of spiritual propriety toward the scholarly personages of the Ummah. The copious notes are illuminating. It will be one of the most important books on this subject for many decades to come, Allah willing. The publisher is to be congratulated for bringing out a work of such sterling scholarly merits.

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